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# **PROGRAMME F VICTOR**

by

**Harold J. Laski**

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**W. M. Macmillan**

**Ellen Wilkinson, M.**

PROGRAMME  
FOR VICTORY

# PROGRAMME FOR VICTORY

*A Collection of Essays prepared for the  
Fabian Society*

*By*

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## NOTE

THESE essays are based on a series of lectures delivered under the auspices of the Fabian Society. They represent not the collective view of the Society, but those of the individual contributors. The Society's responsibility is limited to approving the contents as embodying facts and opinions worthy of consideration within the Labour Movement.

The aims of the Society are the furtherance of socialism and the education of the public on socialist lines. Membership is open to all who are prepared to accept the Constitution of the Labour Party, and people of all progressive points of view are invited to become associates.

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JOHN PARKER, M P,  
*General Secretary, Fabian Society*

I

THE NEED FOR A  
EUROPEAN REVOLUTION

*By*  
PROFESSOR HAROLD J LASKI



# THE NEED FOR A EUROPEAN REVOLUTION

## I

THE destruction of Mussolini and Hitler is essential to the salvation of Europe. But we shall not understand this war if we attribute its coming solely to the malevolence of these evil men. This war is more truly the second act in a vast world-drama on which the curtain went up on 4 August 1914. It is, in part, a struggle for world-dominion between old empires and new, in that sense those are right who speak of it as an "imperialist" war. But it is not merely an imperialist war. It is also the declaration of bankruptcy on the part of capitalist civilization. It is the proof that the operation of the profit-making motive can no longer produce either a just or a peaceful society. It proves that the forces of privilege stand in the way of that access to the potentialities science has now made possible for us, that, unless their power is arrested now, they

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will destroy, to preserve themselves, all the democratic institutions and procedures of freedom which have struggled so painfully to recognition in the last four centuries

Anyone who examines either the aims or the record of Hitler and Mussolini is entitled to conclude that those who oppose them stand, by comparison, for liberty and democracy. There are ugly and evil things in our way of life, unjust things also. But there is nothing so ugly, so evil, or so unjust as the basic principles upon which the dictatorial systems are built. I can therefore understand why their overthrow seems to many in itself a sufficient end. But I am bound to remark that their overthrow will not, in itself, end the causes which led to their emergence, and that, unless we seek to deal with those causes, we shall find ourselves confronted by precisely the same grim issue about which we are fighting to-day. Merely to defeat them will not deal with that mass-unemployment upon which they fed, merely to defeat them will not solve that problem of markets which lies at the root of this conflict. Merely to defeat them will not liberate the forces of production from those relations of production in which they are imprisoned. It is not enough to want victory,

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it is essential to want victory for ends that make possible an enduring peace

Those ends involve the need to reorganize the foundations of our social order. We all know now that the independent sovereign state is an anachronism that has exhausted its historic utility. We all know that the concept of neutrality has no longer an effective place in international law. We all know that the division of the community into the two nations of the rich and poor makes a common agreement upon fundamentals impossible, for men who live so differently think too differently to share the same premises of action. We all know that a society based predominantly upon what Carlyle called the "cash nexus" is poisoned at its source. It works in its epoch of expansion, in its epoch of contraction it reveals all the ugly sores of the disease of social injustice that are endemic in it. So that the ends to which our victory must be devoted are concerned with prevention of the disease itself. Without that prevention, men like Hitler and Mussolini are bound to arise again because all the conditions will still be present that evoke them.

The essence of Fascism, whether in its German or its Italian form, is the use of the

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outlaw by privilege to defend itself against the demand of the masses for justice That demand is made when the contraction of the economic system brings out the inherent contradiction between the forces of production and its relations With ourselves, and at this point, capitalist principles cannot operate so as to satisfy the established expectations of the masses , and the latter then seek to use their political power to reorganize economic institutions Then claims then become a threat to privilege , and its possessors, panic-stricken at the prospect of its loss, turn to the outlaws for protection against the threat The outlaws then take over the state-power But since they cannot, without a wholesale reorganization of property-relations, satisfy the masses any more than their predecessors, they are compelled to dictatorship in order to stifle protest More, they are compelled to military adventure , for it is the inescapable necessity of all dictatorship to seek in conquest the means of relief from domestic grievance They who dare not practise justice at home are compelled to military adventure abroad that they may offer their victims some compensation for their slavery

The evil showed itself first in Italy and

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Germany Let us be clear that the causes of this evil were at work, if with retarded effect, in France, in the United States, and with ourselves History, for a number of reasons, had given us a leeway, economic and political, of which we have in some degree taken advantage But let us remember that the period of "appeasement" shows nothing more clearly than that the forces of privilege had no real grasp of the nature of Hitlerism until they were threatened by its advance They were even willing to eulogize and assist it, their antagonism did not develop until it was obvious that unless they met its challenge they, too, would be the victims of its rapacious ambition Nor need we conceal from ourselves that the sympathy of privilege for Hitlerism was based on the realization that it had destroyed the institutions upon which the advance of the masses depended Not until the tragic surrender of France did it become unmistakable that the enthusiasm of privilege for liberty and democracy was circumscribed always by its insistence upon the rights to which it had become accustomed by tradition It was prepared to fight for an old society in which the historic equilibrium of the past was maintained It was not prepared to fight for a new social order in

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which the revolutionary dynamic of democracy was evoked as the instrument of victory

Yet the need for that dynamic is the supreme lesson of the first nine months of the war. The peoples entered it in grim and sober mood. They were not deeply moved by the promises of statesmen, they had heard them before, and they had experienced the massive gap between promises and fulfilment. They felt uneasily that the methods by which the war was waged promised them no end in which there was relief from their burdens. They knew that Hitlerism was a bestial thing, they were aware that its overthrow was essential to their future. But both the men in charge of government, and the means they employed, left them with the suspicion—I add the intelligible suspicion—that their sacrifice would be disproportionate to their gains. Their rulers would learn every lesson but the supreme lesson, which is the understanding that what needs revision to-day is not this institution or that but the constitutive principle of social organization itself.

The central problem for our rulers is that they should understand in time that we have reached an epoch certain to be as decisive in its results as that which saw the fall of Rome,

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or that which, with the Reformation, witnessed the rise of the middle class to power. We have now to plan the economic and social foundations of our life in the interest of the whole community, or to relapse into a new dark age in which the outlaws everywhere will rule us. The present regime, which frustrates the possibilities of science, which condemns millions to poverty and ignorance, which maintains its authority by methods which are too often an outrage on human decency, cannot expect to secure for that authority the allegiance of millions who have no interest in its continuance.

Does anyone expect the working class of Poland to fight for the return of the Becks and the Lubomirskis? Are the Roumanians likely to attack their new German masters that they may return to the yoke of King Carol and Madame Lupescu? Will the Italians rise against Mussolini to restore that inept ballet of group-manceuvres in which Giolitti was the chief performer? Frenchmen are not likely to turn on the Pétain regime for a system in which the Two Hundred Families were driven into headlong panic and anger by social reforms as mild as those of the Blum government. And let us be frank enough to say that the masses of this country will not be content with a

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victory which leaves the gains of life still to the Westminsters and the Bedfords, while the men and women of London and Coventry and Jarrow have no heritage but its toil. The present regime belongs, in its essential outlines, to a past that has gone for ever. Our problem is whether we can use the dramatic opportunity of war to lay the foundations of a new social order.

### II

My argument is not that military victory is impossible save on these terms, it is rather that, otherwise, military victory will solve none of the problems before us. Our business, as I conceive it, is to recognize in all its amplitude the situation we occupy, and to utilize its revolutionary possibilities to begin the task of constructing a new social order.

That policy, as I think, has two immense advantages. In the first place, it offers our own people the prospect of a more just society, in that prospect there are hope and exhilaration, and these create that power to endure which is so vital in a struggle like ours. In the second place, it enables us to put before the peoples of Europe, above all before the victims of the Dictators, the pattern of a social order



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with the promise of which neither Mussolini nor Hitler can hope to compete. Thereby we build for ourselves an army of allies who, as the war deepens, will find no prospect of hope save in our victory, who will, as we move to the offensive, become as it were the spearhead of our attack. Our task, this is to say, is the preparation of that European Revolution in which the overthrow of Hitler and Mussolini makes possible an epoch of creative liberation.

Their power is built upon terror and victory, but terror can only maintain its authority by a continued success which destroys hope in its victims. My argument is that we can break the legend of their success, the paralysis that, as in France, it is able to induce, in part by showing in the field that they cannot conquer, and, in part, by the idea we place behind our military effort, by diverting the allegiance men are compelled to give them to ourselves. I am pleading, in fact, for an offensive of the mind and spirit parallel with the offensive of arms. I am arguing that we can shatter the psychological hold of the dictators upon their subjects by making the end our victory will serve seem to these the one road to a better way of life.

They do not feel certain that this is the case

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to-day They will only be made to feel certain as our cause establishes its *bona fides* with them. This it will not do by the easy rhetoric of promises to be fulfilled when the war is over. It will do so only as they see that we really mean what our rhetoric is pledged to perform, and we can only give them that insight by the performance of the promises in which we seek to make them believe. In war, the deed is the word. If we claim to be fighting for democracy and freedom, what better way is there of proving our claim than to broaden and deepen *in the midst of war* the democracy and freedom that we have? Is not every great reform in war time not only a mark of our faith in the principles for which we fight, but, also, a compulsion to others to recognize the reality of our faith? Great wars are won by great ideas. The wisdom of a nation struggling to survive is marked by its capacity to recognize the great idea which has the future on its side.

We shall not get the masses in Europe to rise against Hitler and Mussolini for the restoration of the old order, for that old order meant, to the vast majority of them, poverty and ill health, ignorance and war. We can get them to rise for a new social order in which privilege is no longer, as now, the master of the common

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good I do not want to underestimate the magnitude of the changes this policy will eventually imply, obviously they are very great They will mean, in the long run, a new social faith, a transvaluation of all values I know, too, that to ask for their initiation by consent, as I am now doing, is to ask for the display of a magnanimity which is one of the rarest qualities in history I ask for it, nevertheless, on two grounds I ask for it, first, because, in any profound way, we cannot win the war without it, and I ask for it in the second place, because there is no other way to the creative use of victory

In any profound way, we cannot win the war without it We all know that a new international order is indispensable if there is to be respect for international law and security against aggression But a new international order means a new social order; the real reason for the failure of the League of Nations was the maladjustment of its principles to the environment in which it had to operate When we have beaten our enemies, we have to win their co-operation in the common task if our lives are not to be a perpetual nightmare Can we win that co-operation without convincing them that the new order is to their advan-

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tage not less than ours ? They will not believe our high eloquence about liberty and democracy when so many of them know how many among ourselves regard our liberty and democracy as still tragically incomplete To end this war without the psychological basis of international stability is to have fought it in vain It was the failure to recognize the need for its provision that lay at the root of the French defeat, and of the fall of the Chamberlain government Neither roused the dynamic of democracy because the conception each had of democracy limited its boundaries by the claims of traditional privilege And because the war marks the end of traditional privilege, at least in the context of the historic capitalist democracy we have known since the French Revolution, only fundamental innovation will liberate the energies we require for something more lasting than a Pyrrhic victory

Nor can we otherwise, I am maintaining, use victory creatively Fundamental innovation now will alone give us the plane of action upon which, when the war is over, our politicians can continue that organized right to opposition which is the secret of representative democracy Our task, if we can, is to find a common ground between parties which will enable us to effect

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necessary social change in terms of consent To do so, we have to adjust vitally the relation of the forces of production to the existing ownership of its instruments If we fail to do so, all the pre-war problems will descend upon us with redoubled force , and the costs of the war will make our ability to solve them far less than it is to-day

More than this Without a new frame of reference, our class differences will, at the end of the war, have been immensely exacerbated by the widespread sense of a deception of the masses even less justified than that after 1918 We have aroused great expectations of social justice We have exacted immense sacrifices, above all from the poor We have praised the capacity of the common people heroically to endure immense sufferings, and we have promised them the reward of that endurance We shall have to pay the bills for these Either we pay them with the understanding that to meet them generously is no more than justice , or, if that understanding is absent, we shall move rapidly to a position where the differences between men on matters of social constitution cannot be accommodated in terms of reason

If that tragedy occurs, we shall have thrown our victory away For, on the domestic side,

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we shall have fought to maintain a democratic system without organizing the conditions in which it has the opportunity to function effectively. And, on the international side, internecine conflict here will be so grave a pre-occupation that we shall lack the power and the energy to preside over that European reconstruction in which our leadership will be so obviously essential. We shall be seeking to perpetuate that old world the contradictions of which have been responsible for the conflict in which we are engaged. To seek that perpetuation in one of those moments when it is evident that a great revolution is seeking to discover its appropriate institutions would be a blunder so great as to imperil for long years to come the preservation of a civilized way of life.

### III

There is a remark of Peter Kropotkin's which offers us the formula that we need. "A revolution", he wrote,<sup>1</sup> "must from its inception be an act of justice to the ill-treated and the oppressed, and not a promise to perform this act of reparation later on. If not,

<sup>1</sup> I owe this quotation to Mr T. R. Fyvel's brilliant book, *The Mob and the Masses* (1940), p. 115.

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it is sure to fail " That is the answer to those who want social reform to wait until after the war We cannot afford to let it wait, simply because its initiation now is an essential part of the strategy of victory To embark upon it now is to give hope and exhilaration to our own people, the qualities, as I have said, which enable them to endure But it is also to give them a faith which, as with Cromwell's Ironsides, as with the Republican armies of Revolutionary France, as with the ragged legionaries of the Soviet Union in 1917, has the power to communicate its passion to the world The masses all over the world are awaiting a lead They will not find it in the men who speak great words only They will find it in the men who make great deeds evoke great words In an international civil war like that in which we are engaged there is no promise but performance

I recognize that we cannot embark upon a programme which endangers the unity of the nation I recognize, too, that the claims of totalitarian war mean that we can initiate only the beginning of fundamental change, and that the process will have to be spread over long years of peace I urge that there are two circumstances which make the present moment

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a singularly propitious one for this adventure. The first is that war itself has compelled profound changes and so induced the mood in the nation that is prepared for great experiment. Crisis always breaks the cake of custom, and it is folly not to take advantage of the mood while it lasts. For, on all historic experience, with the end of the crisis the mood for experiment disappears also among all who are satisfied with the outcome of the crisis. You can see that in the Cromwellian wars, you can see it in 1794-5 in France, you can see it in England after 1832, it is obvious again in France between February and June of 1848, it was clear in the victorious countries after 1918. President Harding's classic call for "normalcy" is the expression of the mood involved, and "normalcy", remember, leads directly to the demand for the "New Deal". If we can use the widespread sense that a great crisis calls for great innovation, we can, I think, get the support for change which reaches far beyond the ranks of those who think in party terms only.

The second circumstance is not less important. The formation of the Churchill government was not merely the replacement of one statesman by another. It was also the deliber-



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ate association of the organized workers of this country with the war effort , and it cannot be assumed that, in accepting that association, their leaders abandoned the principles which led them to accept the view that a victory over Hitler and Mussolini is essential I do not for a moment claim that the Labour leaders are entitled to exact for their support the enactment of the Labour Party's programme , granted our constitutional principles, that would obviously be an impossible demand But I do urge that they cannot be asked to lend the vital support they bring merely to enable the Conservative Party to maintain the *status quo* as of 3 September 1939 They are entitled to ask for those changes which at once enable the war to be won, in that profounder sense that we are attaching to victory, and prevent its aftermath from degenerating into a sordid domestic struggle in which the fruits of a military victory for democracy are thrown away They may, that is to say, legitimately demand now the discovery of that plane of political action which fulfils the conditions of an enduring peace They are entitled to ask for its discovery now because the common people are now paying the grim costs of the war , and because the new mood of the public

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is so largely the outcome of the faith and energy the common people have put into the national effort

If this attitude be accepted, it seems to me that we have at least the large outlines of a basis upon which to build. Obviously enough, in a war of which the detailed contours alter every day, no government can be expected, in the international sphere, to attempt to do more than lay down the general principles with which it will approach a settlement. Its end is enduring peace, and this is incompatible with the power of any nation-state to threaten by aggression the security of its neighbours. This must mean an international order the members of which abandon their claim to sovereignty, and agree that all matters of common concern shall be matters, also, of common decision. It is, I think, clear that the executive organ of that international order must control all armaments, especially aviation. It is clear, further, that tariffs, currency, migration, the standards of labour, the right of access to raw materials, and the use of colonial possessions are matters of common concern in which no state can exercise sovereign powers. In the light, further, of the years between 1919 and 1939 the power in the

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international authority to protect, under sanctions, the rights both of national and religious minorities, and of individual citizens, so that there is, to take a single illustration, something akin to an international writ of *habeas corpus*, must be established beyond a peradventure Great Britain must undertake to see that these principles are written into the peace settlement ; that it is a settlement freely negotiated between equals , that its acceptability is not destroyed by either punitive indemnities or punitive annexations And it is urgent to make it understood that, whatever the form of constitution in any state, its essential institutions must not violate the tested procedures of freedom I should like to see Great Britain pledge the utmost she can afford from her resources to the reconstruction of stricken Europe , and I should like to see an emphasis from her leaders that, subject to the primary rights of their own inhabitants, she is willing to place those of her colonies not yet ready for self-government under international mandate Further than these general principles in the international field, it does not seem to me possible as yet to go , we cannot penetrate the hidden veil of the future to speak with confidence either upon the form of international

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institutions, or the details in which the application of these general principles will be clothed. But already, by such principles, we are offering to Europe co-operation with national freedom as against the Nazi ideal of a European unity that is built upon the slavery of the vanquished to the victors. The new imperialism, in short, of which Hitler and Mussolini are the protagonists, must be met by our abandonment of that imperialism which regards colonial peoples as the fit subject of economic exploitation. And, if we accept this as desirable, we must come to the peace conference with clean hands. We do not do so while India is a plaintiff before the bar of history demanding a right to self-government which we persistently refuse to recognize.

It would take too long for me here to examine even the outlines of the Indian question. I admit its complexity, I admit that no solution can be adopted which jeopardizes the reasonable claims of any minority in India, racial or religious. But I say with all the emphasis I can that no party in Great Britain has as yet genuinely sought a full accommodation with India, that every offer made has been accompanied with reservations and restrictions the purpose of which has always been

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to keep the keys of Indian power in London, that this policy, sooner or later, will lead to catastrophe in India and that this catastrophe will reflect so grievously upon our international standing as to destroy our power of effective leadership in Europe. A free India in voluntary association with the British Commonwealth of Nations would immensely strengthen us both in the war itself and in the years of peace beyond. A sullen India, governed by repressive ordinances, the lathi and the concentration camp, an India in which we sentence Nehru to rigorous imprisonment, is a grim denial of our claim to fight for liberty and democracy. For it is not easy to distinguish the characteristics of British rule in India, at least in their essentials, from those of Nazi rule in Czechoslovakia. It is lamentable that it should be so.

Yet I think, given statesmanship of courage and imagination, that the Indian problem can be solved. Let the Viceroy replace the unrepresentative nominees of his present Council with men who command the confidence of the Central Legislative Assembly. Let it be the business of this new Council to summon, as at Philadelphia in 1787, a constituent assembly to work out the details of a constitution for

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self-governing India , let us agree that within a year or two years from the close of hostilities the British Parliament will enact the Constitution by statute, and that when as between Indians themselves, or between Indians and Great Britain, differences arise upon which agreement is impossible, they shall be referred to the final arbitration of the President of the United States Does anyone seriously doubt that, upon this basis, we could come to an arrangement with India which would transform it from a sullen subordinate to an eager partner in our great enterprise ? Does anyone, either, doubt that a continuance of repression in India will bedevil our politics as bitterly and as dangerously as Ireland bedevilled them in the last century ? And does anyone doubt, finally, that whatever the public professions we make, the real reason the world will attribute to us if we reject such a basis for settlement, is the desire of our rulers to maintain our imperial power to continue the economic exploitation of India ?

I use India as a symbol of the larger imperial problem , I add only that our good name before the world seems to me bound up with some such approach as this But I turn from these themes to those domestic issues our

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handling of which seems to me central to the future of the world. If we handle them wisely, we can, I think, as certainly lead the world in social and economic reconstruction to-day as we led it in and after the eighteenth century. If we fail to handle them wisely, whatever the military outcome of the war, we shall drift rapidly to social revolution in this country. We shall then have lost the war, since, if social revolution supervenes, it will be impossible to maintain the fabric of democratic institutions, and if they are destroyed here, they will, believe me, be destroyed all over the world.

What are we entitled to ask for from this government in the sphere of social and economic change which offers hope and exhilaration to the people and safeguards us, in the post-war period, against the danger that the forces of privilege will prefer their vested interests to those changes which an enlargement of the forces of production so obviously requires?

Any such programme, I suggest, exists on two levels: there is the level of immediate satisfaction, and there is the level of long-term preparation. On the first level, I should include the amendment of the Trades Disputes

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removed from the hazards of the profit-making motive. In that sector belong to-day the mechanism of national credit, coal and electric power, transport and the ownership of the land. We need, second, a radical transformation of our educational system. We should abolish the present class division of the schools, and we should, at long last, establish free secondary education for all. It is important, moreover, to increase the opportunities of further training at the university level. We need, thirdly, a great extension of the public health system with special attention, for the reasons Sir John Orr has made evident, to the problems of nutrition. We need, fourthly, full safeguards that, after the war, the immense issues connected with the rehousing of the population shall not be left to the discretion of the ground-landlord and the speculative builder. We need, finally, the assurance that economic planning after the war will safeguard us against the recurrence of mass-unemployment and those distressed areas which, like Jarrow, have been so long a grim reproach to the quality of our statesmanship.

I cannot here defend, at the length they deserve, the significance of these principles. Of their general character I will only say that,



without their acceptance, the national democracy will be as incomplete after the war as it was before it, and that, to accept these principles in war time, will have three results of importance. They will convince the masses that it is genuinely intended to establish a more equal society, that conviction is fundamental to the endurance which maintains faith in, and the power of, victory. They are an announcement to the world of our confidence in the power of democracy to solve its economic and social problems, the impact of that confidence upon Europe and America will be as vital as that of 1789 or of 1917. They assure us, after the war, the necessary time and opportunity to find that equilibrium of political effort which safeguards the continuance of democratic institutions, and it is impossible, I think, to overestimate the value knowledge of this safeguard will bring to the masses upon whose energies the maintenance of the war effort depends.

It is said that the forces of privilege in this country will never accept a programme of this magnitude. Those who take this view may be right. If that is the case, two inferences follow. The first is the simple one that, like the comparable class in France, the forces of

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privilege care more for their vested interests than they do for democracy. If they are unwilling to yield principles which provide the key to victory, then the inference also follows that, after the war, they will fight for their privileges against the demands of the masses, sooner or later, and sooner, I think, rather than later, that means social conflict in this country and, with its coming, the end of democracy. I do not assume for a moment that, in such a conflict, the popular forces would be successful. I only point out that, if they were defeated, we should ourselves become a Fascist society and that we should then have fought a war for democracy in vain. Even if the popular forces won, a period would be inevitable in which democratic institutions would have to be suspended, and obvious contemporary analogies suggest that the price for their suspension is a grim and heavy one.

I do not speak of the programme I have outlined here with confidence that it will prove acceptable. I think it to be true that the mood of the country is ready for it, and I think it to be true also that its acceptance by the Government would give us the moral leadership of the world. I think its acceptance,

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also, is a test of the capacity and insight of our leaders, for wisdom in politics is the power to make the historically possible the historically inevitable. Such a programme as this would begin, peacefully, the readjustment of the relations of production to the forces of production. It calls neither for the proscription of persons nor the expropriation of property. It provides the time for that psychological readjustment to great innovation which offers the surest basis for the avoidance of conflict. It would begin, in a real way, the mitigation of what Professor Tawney has called our "religion of inequality", and, thereby, set our freedom in the only context in which it can have substantial meaning.

These are, on any showing, immense advantages. For they would as their extent became known give to the masses of our people that confidence about their future which is the secret of the victorious temper. I do not say that without this programme we shall not win, indeed, I accept the view that a world in which Hitler and Mussolini are overthrown is, of itself, a better world. But I do say that to overthrow them for so great an end as this programme implies is to begin one of those great ages of expansion in which the spirit of

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man finds the opportunity of creative liberation For this programme goes to the root of the problem out of which the war came it offers a real and continuous prospect of raising the standard of life of the masses By setting our own house in order in a democratic way, I believe we not only serve our own best interests, we also set an example to others which, as our enemies begin to feel the weight of our power, they will not be slow to follow For by deepening the foundations of all that is democratic in our own way of life, we make them see, as in no other way can we make them see, that they have in truth nothing to lose but their chains

“ War ”, said Edmund Burke, “ never leaves where it found a nation ” Those who find unacceptable a programme of this kind have at least the obligation to provide an alternative They must do so remembering that hardly one of the issues we confront is settled by the fact of victory in the field merely They must do so, remembering also that if the forces of privilege fail, after this war, to find the bases of an enduring peace, they are certain to move rapidly to irretrievable disaster And they must remember, further, that in ultimate analysis no society is likely to maintain itself

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unless it is able to prove to its citizens that it is just. The best proof of social justice is the capacity to embark on great reforms, and the best time for such embarkation is always when crisis has opened men's minds and hearts to the necessity of great adventure. They are, in remarkable degree, so open to-day. Our future depends upon whether our leaders have the courage to utilize their opportunity.

One final word may be said. I have argued that there is need for a European Revolution and that it is the historic mission of Great Britain to inaugurate its coming. To many the idea of revolution is inherently a terrifying one, there is no path they will not tread in the effort to evade its onset. The answer to their fear is a simple one: the revolution is, in any case, unavoidable. By the fact that we have embarked upon war with the Fascist states, its coming is assured, the only questions to be raised are whether its birth-pangs can be abridged and its purpose made beneficent. If the victory of this country were to be set in the perspective I have described, I think that abridgment and that beneficence can be secured, without it, I believe we shall enter upon an era as dark as any in the human record. History has given us an opportunity

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it is our duty to confront with the audacity proportionate to its immensity For the more fully we grasp its implications, the greater will be our service to humanity

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WORLD GOVERNMENT

*By*

HAROLD NICOLSON, M P

## WORLD GOVERNMENT

IN choosing the phrase " World Government " as my title I have been anxious to avoid at the outset those prejudices or affections which are associated with current terms, such as " League of Nations ", " Federal Union ", or " The New Order ", and to approach from a general and less topical angle the eternal problem of how to secure that law rather than violence shall regulate the relations between States

It is important, I suggest, to realize that this problem is no new problem thrust upon the world by the failure of the settlement of 1919 or capable of being finally settled by some apochryphal solution sprung from the brain either of Herr Hitler or of Mr Clarence Streit. It is a problem which has exercised the mind of man from the very dawn of civilization and which at different dates in the world's history has provoked many varying solutions, some of which have proved partially, locally and temporarily, successful, but none



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of which has proved universally or durably successful. In its essence the problem is no more than the extension to large communities of those habits of order and obedience which, in any group of civilized beings, regulate the relations between man and man. That same balance between rights and duties which in the long story of mankind has progressively regulated the relations between members of a family, members of a tribe, and members of a nation ought, it would seem, to be capable of almost unlimited expansion so as to embrace the nations of the world. It would appear at first sight that there can be little difference in kind between those processes which have rendered Great Britain or the U S A comparatively ordered communities and those processes which could create an ordered community of nations. The analogy between national fusion and international fusion might, indeed, be pressed further. It is possible to trace in the several experiments which have been made in world government the same variations with which we are familiar in the evolution of national States. We have had the autocratic or tyrannical experiment as under the Pax Romana or the European dominance of Napoleon. We have had the

oligarchic experiment as in the Castlereagh system of diplomacy by conference and in the ensuing Concert of Europe. We have even had the mystic or theocratic variation as in the Greek Amphictyonies or in the Holy Alliance. And we have had in the League of Nations what might be called the Democratic Experiment under which the nations of the world were to co-operate on a basis of theoretical equality. None of these experiments has proved permanently successful and, one is tempted in moments of pessimism to believe that the mind and soul of man are too narrow to admit expansion beyond a certain limit or to pursue enlightened self-interest beyond a certain horizon of awareness. Are we to admit, therefore, that man is only capable of subduing anarchy within prescribed limits and that whereas he can achieve order over wide areas of the earth's surface he is unable to achieve order as between nation states? I refuse to accept so negative an assumption. But I remain aware that for three thousand years man has tried and failed to achieve some form of international governance comparable in certainty to the rule of State Law. I approach the problem therefore, not in any mood of despondency, but in

a mood of scientific doubt And I view with alarm the optimism of those who believe that past failures have been due to evident and remediable errors and that all will be feasible now that so many of us have seen the light

Let me begin by considering the nature of the checks and bars which have impeded what would seem to be a natural evolution from international anarchy towards international order Why is it, in other words, that human beings are able to subordinate individual interests to common interests up to a certain point, but are unable to achieve that subordination beyond that point? Let us assume for the purpose of argument that the most constant and reliable of human motives is the motive of self-interest, and that the standard of civilization reached by any given community is to be assessed by the number of members of that community who have acquired the moral habit of placing ultimate self-interest above immediate self-gratification, and who have understood that the welfare of any individual is in the end dependent upon the welfare of the community in which he lives In very primitive societies this sublimation of selfishness does not extend beyond the

family or tribe, in more developed societies the individual is able to identify his own interest with the interests of his class or county. In some communities, such as the United States of America and the British Commonwealth of Nations, this identification of personal with group interest has been expanded over very wide areas. Yet there has always come a point hitherto at which divergencies of race, religion, culture, and language have proved barriers to further expansion and at which the sense of identity is frustrated by the sense of difference. It may be contended that in the present century there has emerged a feeling of class solidarity which has been able to transcend the limits of the old Nation State. Far be it from me to dismiss these extra-national sympathies as fictional or transitory. On the contrary they may prove the nucleus of a new stage in evolution. But it has yet to be shown that these class sympathies are sufficiently deep and operative to withstand the conflict of sectional economic interests or to mitigate the instincts of national self-preservation.

It must be recognized also that science has in recent years gone far to level the barriers which separate different nations and thereby,

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to enlarge the area within which the ordinary citizen may be able to identify his personal or group-interests with the interests of others. Hitherto, however, the effect of rapidity of communications (the effect, that is, of aviation, the wireless and the cinema) has not been so much to create enhanced sympathy with other forms of civilization as to diminish the old intensive confidence in one's own form of civilization. This may be all to the good in that it dilutes separatism, and by diminishing extreme self-identification with a particular form of national consciousness, may prepare men's minds for the reception of a wider form of identification and a wider form of consciousness. It is interesting, and perhaps useful, to observe that in the first three decades of the twentieth century this reduction in the mechanical barriers between Nation-States has created a formidable reaction in the shape of exaggerated and artificial differentiation. The very fact that the rapid improvement in physical and intellectual communication has led to some diminution in purely national identity, has stimulated some countries to reaffirm and fortify that identity by appeals to national self-consciousness more emotional, and indeed more hysterical, than any which the world has

ever seen before. The wave of nationalism which has overwhelmed Italy and Germany, and gone so far to destroy the spiritual values of those two countries, is not, as Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini would assert, a movement of rebirth, but little more than a stratagem to affirm and increase national power by exaggerating in the twentieth century ideas which are in their essence alien to the spirit of that century and as such anachronistic. The whole trend of human progress has been one from social violence to social contract, and in reviving violence as a method of adjusting international conflict, the totalitarian States are adopting a method which (however successful it may seem at the moment) is contrary to the whole tide and trend of human development. It is for this reason that the Nazi or the Fascist affirmation of race or national self-consciousness is bound to fail in the end. The vast majority of mankind prefers government by consent to government by domination, it may be possible, owing to the mechanical mobility of tanks and bombing aeroplanes, to impose temporary domination over large areas of the world's surface, but it is not to-day possible to extend that domination over the whole of the civilized earth. The Pax Romana

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succeeded since it was, in terms of that time, universal, the Pax-Teutonica cannot succeed since it will always be little more than local, and the Pax Italo-Germanica is a contradiction in terms

Let us assume none the less that when Herr Hitler proclaims his system of World Order, he is sincere in believing that under this system the nations of Europe, Africa and Asia will attain to greater security and to a more even distribution of the world's goods. Yet even at this early stage of the New European Order it is possible to detect certain political and economic fallacies which will render it unworkable as a stable system.

It is based primarily upon the theory of obedience rather than upon the theory of consent. Yet if Europe is to be reorganized upon the theory of obedience it will not for long be possible to conceal the fact that obedience implies some authority whom one is expected to obey. That authority will not be Rome or Paris, but Berlin. However anxious Herr Hitler may be to convince subject peoples that they are equal partners in a new experiment of world-organization he will not for more than a few months be able to hide from them the fact that his new order,

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his new discipline, emanates from a single centre and is contrived for the benefit of the German ruling caste. As a wholly academic theory it might be correct to say that Europe would be happier had it from the first been organized into industrial and agricultural groups exchanging their commodities freely with each other. Yet modern Europe is not a purely artificial creation but an organic growth, Herr Hitler cannot cut through the tissues of centuries without lacerating human flesh. Nor can he, even if we accord him powers of control and distribution which he cannot possibly possess, impose so artificial a system without acting with a ruthlessness which will provoke passive resistance, sabotage and famine. He will find sooner or later that the system of force, however he may seek to disguise it, is not workable in a world of self-reliant human beings, and he will then discover that in basing his whole structure upon force he has destroyed that mutual human confidence upon which alone any contractual regime can be erected. In other words, he has robbed himself of any possible alternative to his own system.

Already, as I have said, there are many indications that Hitler's New Order can only



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be maintained by armies of occupation. From the first he was obliged to suppress all freedom of speech and writing in France, from the first he has been obliged to impose upon the countries which he has occupied a disguised currency inflation which cannot for long retain its disguise, already he has been forced to deport some 30,000 workmen from Belgium to Germany, and already he has had to send German contingents into Roumania in order to assure himself that her acceptance of the New Order would remain unqualified. He may be able, for a year or two, to keep vast areas of Europe in a state of subjugation, yet I repeat that whereas a system which is based upon consent is capable of almost unlimited expansion, a system which is based upon compulsion, however impressive it may seem at the moment, must in the end exhaust the resources of even the most determined and efficient nation.

If this be true in terms of human nature and of politics it is doubly true when one considers the economic difficulties with which Hitler will unquestionably be faced. Even if he possessed far better means of distribution than he does possess, even if he had at his disposal an elastic instead of a rigid system

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of exchange, even if he were able to dispose of all necessary raw materials he would still be faced by the inescapable fact that no economic system can for long be operative which is based upon compulsion alone. By using his tremendous machinery of propaganda, by forbidding free thought and free discussion, by applying his uncanny insight into mass psychology, Herr Hitler may for a short time convince the peoples of Europe that under his system they will find, if not liberty, then at least a guaranteed security. But in the end it will become impossible for him to persuade the peasants and workers of the countries which he has subjugated that their self-interest is identical with the interests of their conquerors. In the end Hitler's World Government is bound to fail.

Can we ourselves devise an alternative New Order which is more practicable, more durable and more humane?

We shall not do so if we regard this war merely as a war between Britain and Germany. We shall not do so if we contend that the totalitarian States are wholly wrong and barbarous, whereas we are always reasonable and right. We must recognize from the out-

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set that there is much truth in the criticism levelled against Democracy by Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini, Democracy has not lived up to its own magnificent opportunity, individualism has been allowed to degenerate into egoism, and freedom into the avoidance of sacrifice, we have thought so much, and clamoured so much, about our rights that we have forgotten all about our duties, and the inventiveness which democracy has unleashed has provided us with a mechanical opportunity which we have been too lazy, too selfish and too stupid to exploit for common ends. To-day we are hovering between two worlds, one dead, the other (it would seem) powerless to be born. Our elder statesmen know too little and our younger men have not the opportunity to put their ideas into practice. We have reversed the old French proverb. To-day it is "Si vieillesse savait, si jeunesse pouvait"—"If only the old people had the understanding and the young people had the chance." The old people do not understand. the young people have not got the chance.

It is not sufficiently realized in Great Britain that Hitlerism has succeeded because it pretends to be a revolutionary movement. It is not in fact a revolutionary movement, it

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is a counter-revolutionary movement Yet democracy (which is a young thing in terms of history) having inflamed the whole world one hundred and sixty years ago in the form of a heresy, has not as yet developed the vitality to survive as a doctrine Hitler has imposed Hitlerism in the form of a new heresy It is for us to reaffirm democracy in the form of a rejuvenated faith

There are many things which Hitler or Mussolini say about democracy which are perfectly true It is true that democracy arose as a revolt against strong centralized government and has therefore tended to weaken governmental powers It is true that democracy has developed an exaggerated sense of individual self-indulgence as of personal property It is true that democracy has subordinated the constructive plan to a desire to please It is true that democracy has not given to the sovereign people a sufficient sense of sovereign responsibility It is true that democracy has proved incapable of coping with its own material, and even spiritual, success Having achieved the political triumphs at which it originally aimed, democracy has failed completely to carry through those social and economic victories which it ought to

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have attempted Democracy, in a phrase, has run to fat No wonder that the lean, lithe bodies of the Hitler Jugend regard it with arrogant contempt

Yet democracy, if rightly conceived, should not be a middle-aged or middle-class acceptance of the comfortable It should realize that in contrast to tyranny it is a young and limitless experiment Autocracy, being essentially material, must always be confined by physical limitations and limited by the physical capacity of a small group to impose its will upon larger groups Democracy, in that it relies upon intelligence and co-operation, has no limit to the possibilities of its expansion Autocracy relies upon the body, democracy upon the mind

We must remember none the less that government, and above all world government, must be based upon authority The best international charters, such as the Covenant of the League of Nations, even the best types of social order, such as the Denmark or the Sweden of 1938, cannot be imposed or maintained without authority, or in other words without power In condemning compulsion as a means of national and international government, we must not forget that

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consent has got to be organized and disciplined, and that even righteousness may have to be protected by force. It is not sufficient to devise a democratic world-order which will command the sympathy and the assent of the majority of mankind. We must convince the world of four things. First, that our New Order is not merely a device for maintaining the old order more or less unimpaired, secondly, that our New Order is in fact new, progressive and creative, thirdly, that it will possess the physical force to protect those who adhere to it from the aggression of those who may aim at its destruction. And fourthly, that under our New Order the peoples of the world shall obtain the very advantages which Herr Hitler offers them, and will at the same time retain their liberties, their national identity and their hope of free development.

How, therefore, are we to create a New Democratic World, which while preserving all that was really useful and beautiful in the old, shall convince millions of people that its essential purpose is to create a sane and workable future? How are we to create this New Order without trampling (as the totalitarian States have trampled) upon the Rights

of Man and the Rights of Nations? How are we to devise a system which combines authority with liberty and power with consent? That is the problem which we, with our tried political genius, are privileged, and indeed destined, to solve

I am aware that it is dangerous for anyone even remotely connected with a Government Department to make suggestions upon so vital a subject since people will always believe that in some manner he is reflecting official views. I wish to make it quite clear, therefore, that the indications which I am about to make represent nothing but my own personal opinion and should not be taken to commit anybody other than myself

Our first task, to my mind, is to carry conviction both at home and abroad. By that I do not mean only that we should convince people of our good intentions, since the majority of people (although they deride our hypocrisy) would admit that on the whole we are a benignant race. We have got to convince people that we intend to carry out drastic reforms and that we are competent to do so. We must convince the masses in our own country that we are determined at

any cost to the present social structure to carry through a campaign against poverty, and to give to each individual in this island a secure prospect of food, health, habitation, maintenance and opportunity. We must convince people abroad that we are prepared to give them a free share in the resources of our Empire. I do not believe that we shall carry this conviction by making speeches, I believe that a definite plan should be formulated and published within the next few months. Only when the peoples of the world are convinced that we are willing and able to make drastic concessions to the common good, will they accord to our promises and pronouncements that credit which they are bound to accord to the unwelcome, but realistic, actions of Herr Hitler.

Our second task is to secure that our plan offers to the peoples of the world all the material advantages of the Hitlerian system plus the spiritual advantages of liberty and self-respect. We are in the position to do so. We can offer to the enslaved populations of Europe immediate supplies of foodstuffs to any country which is able to liberate itself from the Nazi yoke. We can offer entry into an economic system far wider and infinitely -



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more elastic than any of the rigid systems which Herr Hitler can propound. We can offer them a new World Government which shall be based, not upon the subjugation of all smaller countries to German dictatorship, but upon the free co-operation of all free peoples. We can offer them a Federation which shall be strong enough to withstand any possible attack, which shall be united enough to eliminate the competition of past economic nationalisms, and yet which will enable each member of the Federation to retain its own identity and customs and to develop its own autonomy.

Upon these lines I am convinced we could offer to the world a democratic as opposed to a tyrannical organization of the existing Nation States. Every truly democratic country will be welcomed into this loose Federation. Its economic and physical power will be so overwhelming that few countries will be able to remain outside. And by so doing, this little island, with the help and advice of the United States of America, will for a second time in history have saved Europe and therefore the whole world from the loss of those great human values which it has taken man two thousand years to evolve.

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CULTURE AND LIBERTY

*By*

HERBERT READ

## CULTURE AND LIBERTY

THE connection between culture and liberty is not rhetorical, as the phrase might suggest, but vital and organic. That is the general conclusion I shall try to establish, but before reaching it I must show, first, what meaning I attach to the word culture, secondly, how culture is related to the kind of society we live in, or intend to live in—and that will involve a definition of liberty, and, thirdly, why culture is incompatible with the kind of society which has been set up by the totalitarian States.

What do we mean by this word *culture*? That is rather an embarrassing question for the Englishman. He is not very conscious of his culture, and rather despises people who are. Some of you will remember that in the last war, a good deal of insular propaganda centred round the German word "*Kultur*". We English felt, not merely that it was ridiculous to spell the word with a "K", but that *Kultur*, with a "K" was altogether phoney

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And in a sense I think we were right For the odd thing about culture is that the world is not generally conscious of it until it is dead We can talk about the culture of Greece or Rome, of the Middle Ages or the Renaissance , in each case there are visible traces of it which have survived the test of time But to talk about the culture of the British Empire, for example, that doesn't seem possible , nor, spelling the word with an English " C ", does it seem possible for us to talk about the culture of modern Germany

Culture is, in fact, a slow product of the organic process we call history, and it is very difficult to catch it on the move For example, contemporary efforts to estimate the greatness of poets and painters are almost invariably wrong And if occasionally an age does honour the right man, it generally does so for the wrong reason Now, in our dumb instinctive way I think we as a nation have always realized these truths, and for that reason we have not tried to define the nature of our culture I discovered this in a very practical way when some time ago I undertook to compile an anthology which would express, through the words of our own great poets, philosophers and statesmen, the quality of English culture,

of the English attitude to life. Though it was comparatively easy to find passages in which our writers had praised the English landscape, and even described the characters of Englishmen, and though the historical mission of England has often been defined, there is comparatively little which shows any consciousness of our native genius as it is expressed in our literature and drama, our painting and music. By comparison, the literatures of Germany and of France abound in such self-examinations, self-criticisms, and self-satisfaction.

I am not going to make the mistake of confusing culture with what, in a narrower sense, we call the arts. Culture is something wider than art—and something more intangible. When you have examined all the architecture and drama, the oratory and philosophy, the poetry, painting, and music of a nation, even then you have not exhausted the meaning of the word. To be worthy of the word a nation has to possess something more—something in its manners, something in its speech and behaviour—something which we might call gentleness, grace, or reverence. And this intangible quality may be precisely the essential quality—the one thing which being given to a nation, all others are added. It is precisely

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this quality which is lacking, and always has been lacking, in the culture of our present enemy

For German poetry, for German philosophy, for some periods of German architecture, I personally have the greatest admiration, and though I won't go so far as the late Lord Haldane and describe Germany as my spiritual home, I do not hesitate to confess that I feel for German culture a sympathy which is deep and genuine. But at the same time this feeling of sympathy has always been accompanied by a feeling of despair. It is as though every road taken by German poets and philosophers led to the edge of an abyss—an abyss from which they could not withdraw, but into which they must fall headlong—the abyss which is the second part of Faust, or the transcendentalism of Kant, or the dialectic of Hegel—abysses of intellect no longer controlled by any awareness of the sensuous realities of life. Now these faults are not unknown to the Germans themselves, and some of their greatest writers, Goethe and Nietzsche, for example have indulged in orgies of national self-castigation. But let me quote a less well-known self-criticism—the words of a very great poet, perhaps the greatest of all German poets, and one whom the

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Nazis have sometimes perverted to their nationalistic purposes Friedrich Holderlin. This is what he said about his fellow-countrymen in a letter to his friend Bellarmin <sup>1</sup>

It is a hard word, and yet I say it because it is the truth. I can think of no people more divided and torn than the Germans. You see artisans, but no human beings, thinkers, but no human beings, priests, but no human beings, masters and servants, old and young people, but no human beings. But your Germans like to stick to the most material and necessary tasks, and that is why there is amongst them so much bungling, and so little really free and joyful activity. But even that could be overlooked, if only such men were not so insensitive to all beautiful life, if only the curse of god-forsaken, unnatural life did not rest everywhere on such a people. Everything on earth is so imperfect, the Germans are ever complaining. If only someone would tell this god-forsaken people that things are so imperfect amongst them only because they do not leave purity uncorrupted and sacred things untouched by their coarse hands, that nothing flourishes amongst them because they do not heed the roots of growth, divine nature, that amongst them life is empty and burdensome and too full of cold, mute conflict, because they scorn the spirit, which infuses vigour and nobility into human activity and serenity into suffering, and brings into cities and dwellings love and brotherhood.

That is a long quotation, but it makes an

*Sämtliche Werke*, ed Hellingrath, II, pp 282-6 Trans Peacock, *Hölderlin* (London, 1938), p 129

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important point the point that culture is not an affair of crude calculation, or power and purpose, but of the spirit, of *Genius*, as Holderlin writes in German And this is the essence which, somehow or other, we have to preserve within the structure of our society

Now, what has been proved many times in the past, and what is being proved to-day in Germany, is that this spirit can only exist in an atmosphere of liberty And by liberty we mean, not economic security which is the only conception of liberty entertained by Hitler, but something much more in the nature of intellectual adventure This becomes clear if we examine what might be called the incidence of culture, for then the vital difference between the true and the false conception of culture is seen to be a difference of position I mean that you can regard culture either as something originating in separate individuals, or as something deriving from the collective entity of the nation This is a very important distinction, and Hitler himself is quite aware of it When three years ago he opened the magnificent new *Haus der Deutschen Kunst* in Munich, he made a speech of one and a half hours entirely devoted to these questions of art and culture I think he has the distinction of being



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the first ruler of a nation to speak at such a length on such a highbrow subject During the course of this speech Hitler made quite clear the very close connection which exists between the political and artistic concepts of National Socialism Art, for Hitler, is not a grace or ornament of civilization, it is the very test and proof of nationhood *Art has its roots in the nation* that is the dogma which he reiterates in this speech and to which all his arguments lend support But equally there is the assumption that a nation only flourishes—puts forth its flowers and its fruits—in its art As a nation grows to self-awareness and to power, so there comes into being an art which is of that nation, peculiar to that nation, a direct expression of its being and ethos Hitler is full of contempt for art which claims to be of an age rather than of a race, to be contemporary and international

The artist has to set up a monument not so much to an age, but to his people For time is subject to change, the years come and go That which would only live as the product of a certain age would have to be transitory like the age itself But we National Socialists recognize only one transitoriness, and that is the transitoriness of the nation itself

As long as a nation exists, it constitutes a stable pole in the whirling flight of time It is the one enduring element And thus art, as the expression of this

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stable quality, is an eternal monument, itself stable and enduring having thus no standard of yesterday and to-day, modern and not-modern, but only the standard of "worthless" or "valuable", and so of "eternal" or "transitory" And this eternity is enshrined in the life of the nations, as long as these themselves are eternal, that is, endure

For these reasons Hitler has enforced a national standard of art and has created a whole organization to see that this standard is adopted and observed by all artists, architects, writers and composers within the Reich And with the help of the Gestapo, that standard has been the only standard in evidence for the last seven years

The result has been disastrous It is true that we have not lately had much opportunity to become personally acquainted with the new national architecture, national painting, and national poetry of Germany, but of one thing we can already be certain it is not made for export We have seen photographs of the new architecture, and of some of the new works of painting and sculpture We have read some of the new poetry and drama In so far as it is not crude propaganda, all this work, in every department of art, is of a dullness and deadness not exceeded by our own Royal Academy It is not merely the

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expression of empty life, of cold mute conflict when not barbarous, it is vulgar and sentimental, and never once lifts itself into those regions of radiance and joy and fantasy to which all true works of art belong

Such is the kind of culture which we may expect in a country that subordinates the artist and writer to political censorship and police control. Now the Germans, and the Italians, and the Russians, to whom the same criticism applies, are not unaware of these deficiencies, and the only excuses they can offer are to the effect that a culture is not built in a day, that we must wait for the older and obstinate generation of artists to die off, and that for the moment the state is fully occupied in building up its economic and military strength. Art, according to the Nazi theory, is a sort of reward for national self-sufficiency, and it will blossom when that state of self-sufficiency is securely established. Hitler is welcome to this delusive hope, but his theory ignores the truth of the matter, which is far more subtle. All forms of art, and indeed all expressions of human genius, are the products of exceptionally endowed individuals, and though those products may to a considerable extent depend on the kind of society

to which these individuals belong, their actual creation is the result of a very delicate psychological balance of forces within the individual mind. Anyone who has studied this profoundly interesting problem of artistic expression knows that it is one of the most unaccountable phenomena in the whole field of science, and that no means have yet been devised either of inducing creative forces in the normal mind, or of controlling their operation in the mind of the artist. The creative spirit bloweth where it listeth, that is to say, it obeys laws which are beyond our present understanding. Nothing can explain why a particular individual, born in a casual place like Stratford-on-Avon and brought up in an absolutely casual manner, should have been endowed with the supreme poetic power of Shakespeare. Nothing can explain the erratic phenomena of art except laws of chance and probability which are beyond calculation. But if we are so ignorant of the positive laws of artistic expression, we do know, on the negative side, that no force is so easily inhibited. It is not merely that the act of expression—the particular inspiration which gives birth to a work of art—is subject to frustration by the least interruption and dispersal of the mood of

concentration, but the whole artistic life of the artist can be brought to a sudden end by casual and apparently irrelevant causes—by marriage, by age, by change of climate or even by change of diet. But devastating as these interruptions are, they are as nothing compared with any form of external control affecting the mode and quality of expression. You may put a poet in prison and he will still write like John Bunyan or Oscar Wilde; he may write all the better in seclusion and enforced solitude. But if you tell him what to write and how to write, either he will not be able to write another word, or he will produce those monuments of dullness typified by the coronation odes of our poets laureate.

That, surely, is obvious to all but the kind of thug or philistine who rules in Germany, but let us give the thug his due. Hitler does at any rate acknowledge the importance of art, which is more than any British Government has ever done. Fatal as his interference with art has been, do not let us go away with the complacent idea that our policy of *laissez-faire* is the alternative. As in economics, so in art *laissez-faire* within a capitalist economy merely abandons art to the chances of unrestricted competition and the devil take the

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hindmost It means that art becomes one more commodity on the free market, and that to succeed it must practise all the wiles of salesmanship—mass appeal, sex appeal, adulteration, and the sacrifice of quality to cheapness That, in short, is what is wrong with our culture It has become part of our stock-in-trade Indeed, what little recognition has been given to contemporary art in this country has usually been under the auspices of the Board of Trade

The commercialization of art has been accomplished in the past 150 years Before that time art existed for the most part on *patronage*, and though I don't like the sound of the word, it is to some form of patronage that art must return if it is ever to recover its vitality But this brings us up against a very real dilemma It is impossible—and will become still more impossible in the socialist state of the future—to depend on *personal* patronage The alternative is obvious, you will say—*state* patronage But how are we to visualize state patronage—how is such state patronage going to differ essentially from the state control of art exercised by Hitler's regime? You may have a democratically elected Minister of Fine Arts instead of a commissar

appointed by the dictator , but how exactly is this Minister going to set about his job ? Is there going to be a Labour policy for the Fine Arts and a Conservative policy for the Fine Arts, a government policy and an opposition policy ? And what exactly is a policy for the Fine Arts ? You may, of course, reform the art schools and commission artists to paint murals for all government buildings , you may imitate the Federal Art Project of the U S A , which has at least preserved American artists from starvation But all this, although it may create a lot of cultural activity, will not necessarily create a culture I confess I do not see any vital connection between culture and collectivism I do not see how the cold monster of the state can replace the sympathetic patron, how a heterogeneous committee can ever be a substitute for the man of taste and sensibility Not that all patrons in the past were enlightened some of them were as prejudiced and tyrannical as a Hitler The only substitute for patronage I can suggest involves some form of guild organization, in which the artists, in each branch of the arts, are so organized that they are able to support themselves by exchanging their products for the products of other organized producers

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But this implies a form of guild socialism of which I am apparently the sole surviving advocate in this country

And here let me explain that when I speak of guild socialism, or on other occasions of anarchism or syndicalism, I always have in mind this very problem of culture and liberty, which is for me the snag in the way of any system of state socialism. It is not merely that I cannot see how the sensuous and spiritual truths of culture can be safely delivered into the hands of ministries and committees, it is not merely that I distrust the calculating minds of economists and politicians, but everywhere I look, whether into past history or at present practice, I see the hand of the state as a dead hand, a hand which paralyses every manifestation of the human spirit, not only all forms of art, but even philosophy and religion. What is national-socialism but a state-philosophy or a state-religion? If we are going to oppose national-socialism in the fundamentals of its faith, then we must first and foremost deny this worship of the nation and the state. When Hitler says that the only reality is the nation we must say—No the only reality is the human being. When Hitler says that art is a direct expression of the being and ethos



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of the nation, we must say—No art is a direct expression of the emotion and vision of the individual—of one man speaking to the people and for the people, of one man speaking to and for the whole of humanity But we cannot logically say such things if in the same breath we deny the individual by advocating a form of socialism which, in the pursuit of economic or political ideals, establishes a bureaucracy to which all the ways of life are subordinated I realize that there is no short cut to that ideal of democratic socialism which we all desire But this past quarter of a century through which we have lived has one bitter lesson for all of us In one country after another we have seen the revolutionary fervour which is the basis of our socialism perverted with apparent ease into an instrument of oppression Before Stalin there was Lenin; and before Lenin there was Marx, before Mussolini there was Labriola and before Labriola there was Marx, before Hitler there was Noske and before Noske there was Marx Remember that the component elements of the contraction “Nazi” are “nationalism,” and “socialism” All these movements represent a perversion of the original doctrines of socialism Let us take care that we, too, do

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not pervert the true doctrines of liberty and equality, and find too late that we have created a machine whose power we can no longer control—a machine which will carry us, helpless passengers, into the realm of totalitarian despotism

I have been carried away from my immediate subject, which was the danger of state patronage. But perhaps I have made it evident with what distrust the prospects of art and culture under any form of state socialism are to be regarded. I fail to draw, in this respect, any real distinction between state socialism and national socialism, and I suggest that whatever we call it, any form of totalitarian collectivism is fatal to culture, simply because it cannot leave culture alone, but must pervert it into an instrument of power. What, then, is the alternative?

There is one other possibility. It is to abolish the artist—I mean, abolish the artist as an economic unit, as a separate profession. Art would then be produced, as it generally is to-day, by people who earn their living in some other way. The only duty of the community would be to see that everyone who wanted it had sufficient liberty to practise an art—and I mean liberty in the concrete sense

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of free time. It does not seem to me that this is an impossible ideal to aim at, but it is a general social ideal and not one which can be realized on behalf of art alone. It should be obvious that by the time we had reached such a degree of social development, certain types of artist would have been absorbed in the general organization of the life of the community. The architect, the sculptor, and even the painter would be no longer artists, but artisans, and as such organic units in the building guild, the composer and the dramatist would be artisans in the theatre guild. In fact, about the only social misfit would be the poet, and except for poets laureate and political propagandists like Virgil and Pope, they have always been left out in the cold.

When I say that we should abolish the artist, what I really mean is that we should all become artists. It is this horrible distinction between art and ordinary things, between artists and ordinary men, which is the mark or symptom of the disease of our civilization. When we have put that civilization to rights, we shall be less conscious of our culture but we shall have more of it.

As I present it, this idea may have the appearance of a paradox, but it is not original.

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It was the conclusion reached by that great artist and great socialist, William Morris a man who thought deeply on this very problem of culture and liberty Morris perhaps tended to simplify the problem, both in his reading of the past and his vision of the future But one thing he saw clearly that in the society of the future the division between the artist and the artisan which is so characteristic of our present civilization had to disappear culture, as he would say, had to become identical with the pleasure of life All through Morris's work runs the essential thought, that if you establish the right form of society, culture will be added to it, as naturally as the colour to the rose And as for the right form of society, let me describe it in Morris's own words

It is a society which does not know the meaning of the words rich and poor, or the rights of property, or law or legality, or nationality a society which has no consciousness of being governed, in which equality of condition is a matter of course, and in which no man is rewarded for having served the community by having the power given him to injure it<sup>1</sup>

It is possible that I ought to have said

<sup>1</sup> From a lecture on "The Society of the Future", reprinted in William Morris, *Artist, Writer, Socialist*, by May Morris, Vol II, p 166

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more about bringing culture to the people, but it seems to me that it is useless to bring culture to people who have not been prepared for it. In other words, we have to bring the people to culture. And to do this we have to begin at the bottom and build up. Any extensive change in the cultural level of the nation can only be brought about by a long process of education which will in itself be an essential part of our social revolution. And by a long process of education I do not mean university extension lectures on the painters of the Renaissance, or exhibitions of modern art in places like Poplar and Pontypridd. I don't mean cultural education of any kind. Again I say, make your social revolution and let culture take care of itself. What I do mean is nothing less than a drastic reform of the whole technique of education. We don't, at present, educate children to use their senses. We teach them as quickly as possible to master abstract symbols and the processes of conceptual thought, and by the age of eleven or twelve we have produced a thinking-machine of sorts—a machine which will, in the course of time, take its place in the counting-house and be able to absorb a daily portion of newspaper dope. But this machine has lost the

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faculties it had whilst still an unspoilt child it has lost its instinctive sense of rhythm and harmony, its vivid imagination and spontaneous delight. Education has killed one half of its nature—the half which otherwise would naturally appreciate beauty in all its manifestations. This is perhaps the essential problem, for what is the meaning of culture to people who are mentally blind and deaf, and what is the use of liberty to people whose sensuous faculties are stiff with confinement, wasted for want of exercise?

Programme for Victory—other contributors to this volume are dealing with the major social items, and I have no doubt that they will promise to all peoples the economic security and political freedom for which we all long. But though the workers of the world may lose their chains, what will their new liberty benefit them if they find they cannot any longer move their limbs like free men? The only freedom that matters is the freedom to dance—the freedom to escape from the routine and necessary steps of our economic activities, and to take the air like gods. I am writing as a poet, but the poet in each one of you knows what I mean. You know, like Holderlin, that there is a spirit which infuses vigour and nobility into human

activity and serenity into suffering, which brings into cities and dwellings love and brotherhood That spirit is the spirit of liberty, and its presence among us is the evidence of true culture

4

FREEDOM FOR COLONIAL PEOPLES

*By*

PROFESSOR W M MACMILLAN



## FREEDOM FOR COLONIAL PEOPLES

THE problem of reconciling the two opposites, Freedom and Empire, is a difficult one. Freedom, as we know it, struggling towards equal justice, includes the right to speak our thoughts and follow our conscience, and to be protected from violence in so doing. It involves a real share in making, and when necessary in unmaking, our rulers. But its attainment must also be measured by the degree to which we succeed in granting the same rights to the weak and to minorities. Empire, the rule of people by a power from outside, over which they have no influence, provides a severe test of our professions of freedom.

The facts about Empire as practised have been overlaid by a wealth of theory about "Imperialism". When speaking, as here, of the colonies, excluding India, we are dealing with non-national fragments. Since few of these *can* "stand alone" it is useless to say they *must*! The term "Africa" itself is unknown to millions of Africans. I know

from experience that terms like "Kenya", "Tanganyika", even "Nigeria" and "Gold Coast", mean little to most of their own peoples. Nor are there any more natural units which these artificial ones have replaced.

We have, in recent years, made progress of a sort in thinking of the colonial peoples. In my youth, they were written of as "savages". Another common and opprobrious epithet, "nigger", has now fallen out of use in decent circles. "Kafir" has almost gone from the English language and "Bantu" (like "Aryan" <sup>1</sup>) is too vague. South African Africans will barely tolerate "Native", and "negro" is also beginning to be resented. But we have yet to learn to know these peoples, not as Africans, Polynesians or Caribbeans, but, I quote, as "Gold Coasters, Sierra Leonians, Jamaicans, Barbadians, Seychellois". Until they are so recognized as *peoples*, they cannot be free.

The problem is simplified by the fact that this war has already made necessary some revision of the anti-Imperialist theory, to cover the collapse of the idea of sovereign national states. We know now that freedom is not absolutely synonymous with national sovereignty, as has usually been supposed.

It is clear now that restored Holland, Belgium, Norway, Poland—historical entities as they are—must be placed in some sort of integral relation with their neighbours, not left as isolated units. Is not the Imperialism of theory—the product of the Nationalist age—an inverted nationalism, its major sin the wronging of nationalist aspirations, in India and elsewhere?

The main criticism of Imperial rule is on political and economic grounds, far less is said of social and moral effects or weaknesses. The political defects cannot be denied—Imperial government must necessarily be alien and may at times be arbitrary when exercised as it is, say, by the South African police at their worst. But in fairness it must be admitted that such abuse is the exception, and that in general authority rests more on moral than on military force. There is, however, still a long way to go before Governments are, to the people of the colonies, friends and protectors like the London “Bobby”. The modern attempt to work through “Native Administrations” does distant homage to this ideal.

Here I must briefly refer to the question of race prejudice, which, having consequences

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similar to those ascribed to Imperialism, is sometimes confused with it. The fact that the rulers and the ruled are of different colour is an accident, but colour is seized on as a symbol by the ignorant on both sides when difficulties of social adjustment arise. Race tension will ease only with political and economic, and also moral and social, advance.

In the sphere of economics the inevitability and the evil of so-called "Economic Imperialism" is an article of faith with all Left parties. I will not enlarge on the *theory* except to point out that it is a European one, evolved by Karl Marx in London and developed by Lenin—*a priori*, rather than born of "field" work in any "Empire". The theory universalizes what has *not* been inevitable practice. Colonies *have* been grabbed, but history shows that this was generally for strategic reasons, which we can perhaps understand better now than we did two years ago, in some of the African colonies annexation was to counter the oppression of the slave traders.

The influence of the humanitarians cannot be waved aside as if Livingstone and his successors were the mere dupes of Imperialists. Colonies may be open to exploitation by private interests, and it will not be ques-

tioned that there have been black pages in the record. But the outstanding fact about the colonies—their *poverty*—is absolute, not Marxist (induced) poverty, it is *natural*—and the dominant fact is that there is and has been all too little to “exploit”

Whatever the evils of Imperial rule, the moral defects of colonies are mainly *prior* to, and not the result of, Imperialism. Colonial peoples are originally uncivilized peoples. By reason of poverty and lack of economic development there are no funds to pay for even a minimum of health services and education, to fight unusual difficulties of climate, and to counter the effects of centuries of isolation, and lack of the contact with civilization which many now deplore.

Here I would give a concrete example. My own experience was typical. For many years I fought the stock-pattern evils of Imperialism in South Africa, and I first approached the Tropics (where most colonies now are) with the negative ambition of saving newer colonies from South African mistakes. I was so struck at first with the comparative “freedom” of unsettled Africa that (like most critics at home) I missed the real “colonial problem”—the problem not of mine

labour, or landlessness, or settler's rights, but that of conquering nature in tropical conditions

In effect a "sudden conversion" brought me, only after years of experience, to realize the *natural* obstacles to freedom. I associate that experience with the state of mind induced in me on a certain day when in the course of a weary motor drive in Sierra Leone I suddenly found myself required to improvise a speech to the boys of a large country school. I reached the school at the hottest hour of the day when even the boys were resting in the shade after the midday meal. It occurred to me that less than ten years earlier I could only have got there after a *ten-day tramp*. Even now any car using the road had first to be shipped some 130 miles by rail, there being no road from the sea at Freetown. The journey on foot would have been in every way more leisurely, and better for reflection. But there would certainly have been no schoolboys to speak to, indeed no school at all within miles. As I looked helplessly round, there was the endless monotony of the African bush hemming us in on every side. I had got my text—the battle with the bush.

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It happened to be the dry season, but the country had a high rainfall and even then many of the trees still stood in swamp and rose out of a dense tangle of undergrowth. I realized that before an acre could be planted there were many days of labour required to clear away the forest growth and make room for crops, which alone gave the people such poor subsistence as they had. There were no minerals, and no possibilities of industries to offer any alternative means of livelihood. There was need for more plentiful crops, yet many hands would be required to make more than a small garden—and hands were not numerous. Yet this was an average district of Sierra Leone, which registers the highest density of population (64 per square mile in 1931) of any British colony in Africa.

The work of bush clearing, moreover, had to be done in climatic conditions in which no white man could stand manual labour for long. Though black skins have certain resistant properties it does not follow that the black man goes unaffected by great and enduring heat. My school-boy audience had to work, like so many others, in a district heavily laden with malarial fever—the most insidious of man's enemies in the Tropics.

We now know that if you reduce malaria you at once reduce the (heavy) general incidence of all sickness. But anti-malaria work is costly, and the form it should take not always obvious. Further—to fit them for the arduous work of bush-clearing the labourers would need to be healthy and reasonably well fed. It is an enduring superstition that tropical countries are inordinately blessed, that bread grows on trees, and that a certain inertia peculiar to the people of the Tropics is the consequence of their easy living conditions. Since the date of that speech an official Report in 1939 on *Nutrition in the Colonies* has authoritatively and finally exploded such fancies. In so many words, and having weighed the evidence from many quarters, the Commissioners pronounce that the natural food supply in any part of the Tropics is rarely or never sufficient to maintain full physical vigour. The fact that milk and cheese are unobtainable, and eggs little used, leaves a great gap in the supply of vitamins. Fresh fruit and green vegetables, the latter generally wild bush plants, are scarce—particularly at times when they would be most helpful. These deficiencies occur equally in districts with high and low rainfall. In my



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Sierra Leone district the Harmattan, a relatively cool wind blowing off the Sahara in the northern winter, is a boon to Europeans, but tries the stamina of Africans. This may be partly because it checks the fresh growths. Everywhere there is a period before the first crops, sometimes called the "hunger months", when stored supplies of the staple crops run very low and supplementary green food is also scarce. Food storage is an art imperfectly practised by these people, and always the supplies deteriorate. Meat is eaten only in very small quantities except by a few tribes, or at an occasional feast, so that there is also an almost universal deficiency of protein. In these insalubrious tropical surroundings the so-called protective foods are peculiarly necessary, and in most parts calamitously short. In parts with a heavy rainfall the sun may be hidden for weeks on end during the rainy season, leaving the people short even of vitamin D, which they normally get from abundant sunshine. Yet it is, of course, established that good nutrition is an important part of the fight against malaria.

The question of keeping cattle, important for the supply of milk and meat, is also linked up with the conservation of the soil and better

agriculture Fertilization is only made possible for most tropical peoples by the frequent shifting of their patches of cultivated land. Animal manure is altogether lacking. Increase of population, the pressure of settlers, or even the use of the plough and the growing of economic crops needing more room, make the old practice of "shifting" cultivation impossible, and without fertilization the soil very soon suffers. Erosion from the effect of heavy tropical rain on land which has been stripped of its bush covering and ploughed deep, is another danger, and—a very serious matter—even modern agricultural science has found no sure remedy for these troubles.

I remember trying to express to the boys my sympathy with them in the struggle which faces them and their like in all the colonies. I knew the aspirations which had brought them to the school. I have found the same everywhere in scattered schools from Tanganyika to the West Indies. To them we appear to have advantages they passionately desire to share. Learning is to such really the key to a new world. It is at least something gained that there is now this quite vigorous school, and others like it in remote districts, to help the boys and their people.

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This school, too, was entirely staffed by Africans. There was little in that district for outsiders to "exploit." On the contrary, its people could only look outside for practical help. I remember a shout of approval when I put it to them that their first ambition was to make the wilderness blossom like the rose—or in more modern language to make "the bush" a fit home for healthy children, and for civilized men and women.

We must beware of taking a wholly *materialist* view. But it is unnecessary to remind you of the stultifying, soul-destroying effect of utter poverty and prolonged physical deficiency. Considerations of political freedom do not touch the oppression of poverty. That this always existed in Africa is clear. It was a revelation to me to find, in parts of Africa quite untouched by white settlement, or any white influence at all, poverty every whit as abject as that induced by landlessness in South Africa. Primitive life had and has a certain coherence. The tribal or family unit is usually strong, as are customs of mutual help. The danger of breaking that coherence, narrow as it was at best, blinds many people to the limitations of the old and to the possibilities of wider and

fuller life There are, in fact, many parts where there is no stronger unit than the family—and only a welter of what our fathers would roundly have called superstition to give life a meaning The West Indies of course had their original customs broken for them, if they were ever very strong But none of these tropical peoples, even in pre-colony days, could really be called *free* The individual was tied to his little patch of cultivation, defenceless against natural disasters, famine or disease, and going in fear of their supernatural causes He had his routine of life He was a free member of his village if he had one, but even this “community” sense was never really a “social” sense as we think of it Often the African’s community consists of many uncles and aunts with inconvenient authority over his doings A “community” sense is the first thing that our more advanced schools are now trying to instil in many colonies And—as I have said—the aspirations I illustrated from my Sierra Leone schoolboys are generally shared It is no use trying to impose the *status quo*—the people themselves don’t want to be left “as they are” (or were) They are eager for what we ourselves used to

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call progress. Their first need is for the means to institute schools, colleges, hospitals, social services, to train teachers, doctors, nurses, and social workers, and to provide them with an adequate living. Roads, bridges and transport, in fact capital, are obvious needs which alone can make amenities possible. Taxation of people at subsistence level cannot provide these things, though to-day many services, particularly the upkeep of roads, are organized and paid for out of local taxes by "Native Administrations" filling some of the functions of our local authorities. But the fundamental problem is to provide or attract capital from outside, and if it must be to some degree private capital, to control it in the public interest. Many colonies certainly need to control and make much greater use of such capital enterprise as they now have. But "capital" has been privileged largely because it has been so scarce, and so welcome for the increase it has brought to slender colonial revenues. It must be said also that, apart from some towns and perhaps a very few larger centres, the only districts that have amenities—often of a very high standard—water supplies, sanitation, malaria prevention and good hospitals, are

the bigger mining centres To these elementary needs some of the Copper Belt mines in Central Africa are now adding schools and social centres

There remain the moral problems—to awaken the minds of the masses of the people, as we have done even in spite of ourselves for the few—and to bring them to share with us a common view of the desirable “way of life” This element, essential in any real attainment of freedom, is often underestimated No economic levelling up will heal divisions and differences between nations It might cure the present weakness of the colonies, but different moral standards would be an ever-present threat of friction, and even war The “freedom” the colonial peoples want, and we want for them, will be insecure unless we and they share a real understanding of its essentials

What, if any, success can we show in providing these essentials? If not, what has stood in the way? and how can we achieve more?

It may surprise some if I suggest that British success has been greatest, if not almost limited to, the third and apparently most difficult sphere, the moral problem The

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British Colonies are undoubtedly solidly with us in the fight against Nazidom. This is so not because of concrete benefits they have had from us, but by conviction—because of the gospel of freedom which we have preached, though we have practised it only negatively as *laissez faire*. Colonial peoples, taught by nineteenth-century liberals, the emancipationists, and liberal missionaries, have very firm convictions on the moral questions involved, apart, I think, from any threat to themselves. This gives us reason to hope that they have learned to value good faith and the ideal of equal justice, that they share our abhorrence of rule by secret police and concentration camp, realizing that when they have criticized their rulers they have on the whole escaped any such oppression. We know that India has some fair charges against us, but it is in fact above all from Indians that we have learnt of our sins! It is not yet so certain that Indian or African nationalists have so fully imbibed the highest ideals of freedom, tolerance and concern for the rights of others, as to be actively awake to the needs of their own backward masses, and to the effort needed to raise them. Very few in the Gold Coast seemed to me to show

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any conscious concern about their own employees from the Northern Territories living herded in slums called "Zongos" Where colonial progress towards these more humane ideals has not gone far enough we must take the blame for failure to "free" the people, in the first place economically, from the bondage of material want It is this bondage that creates a material and unfree spirit in so many of them But if we have, as it would seem, laid the foundations in the colonies, and certainly in India, of a "culture" and moral attitude akin to that of ourselves, our Dominions, and the United States, that is not something to be deplored or lightly cast aside

If we have failed in the seemingly easier task of economic development, one reason is that the colonial problem is still misunderstood Because of original natural facts some countries inevitably began as colonies But a certain very prominent minority of these have had all our attention—that minority of colonies where Europeans came in to grapple with the physical conditions we have described, boasting their superior competence, and blaming the inefficiency of such help as they could get or wing from originally



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“backward” *natives* This inefficiency was thought inherent, or due to colour, and its causes neglected, until “poor whites” were worsted in their turn. I myself first came to realize the condition of the Africans through examining that of “poor whites”

The evil consequences of the white intrusion are well known—enslavement, or the import of slaves, the seizure of land alleged to be wastefully used, or unused, the dislocation of native land and agricultural systems, the oppression of farm workers, and the abuse of low-paid industrial (chiefly mine) labour. These typical so-called “native problems” have overlaid or obscured the main difficulty. These evils are immense, and divert attention from the main problem of which they are *results*—the poverty of the land as well as of its people. The presence of Europeans may, however, have other and better effects, even in colonies where they came as settlers and therefore dispossessed the natives. In South Africa, for example, education for Africans is more developed and in many respects better than in the West Indies. There are more opportunities for them also. The presence of Europeans who think of the country as their home supplies an invigorating element lacking

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in colonies beneficently ruled by a detached all-embracing officialdom. In the latter the creative *force* of so-called "contact" is lacking. Teaching by example is definitely a need, and it cannot quite be met by officials. The presence of Europeans should be welcomed if they contribute to the general life of the country. The more different patterns of development the better. There is a crying need for those who can train Africans in any kind of knowledge or skill. As things are, it is because white colonists, and white Governments also, have been so obsessed with making ends meet for *themselves* that they have been guilty of the mistakes and selfishness of South Africa or the West Indies. But South Africa, if it has produced weak and selfish employers, has also produced better and stronger ones, including some mines which have the great capital resources most settlers lack. As I have often said elsewhere, they can *afford* to be enlightened. These better employers, even more than the Governments, have been pioneers in social service. Thus, the Rand Mines made diet experiments that taught us a good deal about the African's original state of health, the deficiencies of his normal diet, and how they can be made good.

The Copper Belt mines and a few in West Africa have been pioneers in health services, water-supply, sanitation, and the prevention of malaria. It was from these better examples, scattered over the whole continent, that I myself came at last to get a clearer comprehension of the remedies needed to make the colonial people efficient, and free.

To most of us the problem of the colonies came to be at best the avoidance of South African mistakes in new areas. Necessary as this was, it produced a very negative attitude. From fear of criticism, officials tried to keep their wards unspotted from the world, instead of finding them a place in it. The South African failures were not fully understood. I, too, began with warnings against the dangers of native landlessness. Even South Africa is as bad as it is because in South Africa as everywhere men talk of *colour*, and colour prejudice, and ignore the prior facts of "backwardness", both white and black.

There are further popular confusions to obscure this central issue. We are ourselves only just emerging from the age of *laissez faire* when enterprise and development were definitely not a State concern. Health and education were provided for the colonies, if at all,

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by devoted and unsupported missionaries Enterprise was either undertaken by private individuals or left undone I think it is fair to remember that this was the approved and general teaching of economic science, the best we had ! This *laissez faire* was the reverse side of our belief in freedom, and to do us justice we applied it to the colonies and the native peoples as to ourselves, allowing each to go its own way, and to develop individually But many of the evils ascribed to Economic Imperialism should be fathered, rather, on the dominant bourgeois economics Without further inquiry the colonies' rulers believed, in quite good faith, that the colonial peoples, like our own, could only suffer from State interference Our sins of omission were greater than any of commission

There is one other small fact In any common British History (and in our own memory) "the colonies" meant Canada, Australia, South Africa (the modern Dominions) and, in a remote corner, the West Indies, which to a still earlier age had been the colonies *par excellence*, along with those "colonies" now United States Most of us gave no thought to the peculiar problem of the Tropics, by far the greater part of the modern

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Empire, not in fact much more than fifty years in our control. In most of these modern colonies native (probably tribal) society is very little touched by European exploitation of any kind.

So it came about that it is only since 1918 (and remember the typical colonies were fairly new in those days) that the real problem has been at all seriously faced. Not quite ineffectively either. The Colonial Office now has medical, agricultural, educational advisers—the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture in Trinidad provides an admirably trained agricultural staff. There are committees to help plan for health and education, and for the first time a real Colonial Service, trained and selected for the job, to execute policy. There have also been private ventures like that which produced the Hailey “Survey” of Africa. In 1929 a Colonial Development Fund was set up—a small and limited affair, spending up to £1 million a year, and that with some regard for its effects in helping unemployment *at home*.

Only late in the day there came two real eye-openers—the Nutrition Report of 1939, and disorders which threw limelight on conditions in the West Indies and produced

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a Royal Commission The former confirmed, what a few of us had been saying, that by no one's fault of commission, but owing to difficult natural conditions, people of the Tropics generally (i.e. most of the colonies) are normally not only uneducated, but under-nourished or malnourished, and have therefore low resistance to prevalent diseases The direct result of these two Reports (the West Indies Commission reported after War had broken out and the report was not published) was the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940, recognizing these facts and making much more generous provision of £5 millions a year for ten years It also removed certain restrictions grants are to be allowed for maintenance as well as capital, and, scrapping the theory that each colony must be self-supporting, the Act virtually recognizes in principle that the people of the colonies, even if they can't afford to pay for them, have a right to a minimum of social services The provision that grants must also benefit the United Kingdom has been dropped, and grants may now be given for such uneconomic purposes as hospitals and schools It may, moreover, be a useful precedent that the new project is vested, so far as the West Indies

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are concerned, in a new officer, a Comptroller-General, who must be to some extent independent of the numerous Governors concerned, and at least a co-ordinating influence in their counsels. There is reason to think that, for what it is worth, we are at last on better lines, and have more idea of the work that has been so long neglected because it has been so little understood.

I hope also we are getting the argument clearer. It is far too tangled a problem to admit of any simple straightforward solution. I hope I will not be taken as merely obstructive if I deal rather hardly with some popular beliefs and some popular remedies. There is no progress to be made in right thinking, for example, so long as the intractable but none the less "super-added" problems of the landless dispossessed natives of the "landlord" colonies are allowed to obscure the real prior issue. In a general forward movement for the colonies, backed by our determination to see them free, the landlord group would have to fall into line. Concentration on this group induces a negative approach, and makes us think of Africans not as naturally free, but as naturally oppressed. There is a great waste of constructive effort in denouncing colonial

wrongs, and making a cock-shy of Imperialism. It is not even enough in itself to assure to Africans their own land—though that is necessary and quite rightly a Labour plank. There is no final solution of the major problems I have sketched if, for instance, West Africans are to be condemned to be a nation of tribal peasants. Whereas in the Gold Coast the customary tribal usage with regard to land has been assured, the spontaneous emergence of real individual claims is creating a confusion which is certainly not benefiting justice. Much other land will be wasted unless “plantation” methods are applied to it. We want to be told in detail how to get *controlled* plantations, or it may be communal farms, or communal factories for processing and marketing crops, and how these are to be run by or at least for the sole benefit of people who, remember, are often unhealthy, always ill educated, totally inexperienced.

Let us attempt a summary of what is needed. First we need to *know*, and from the colonial end, what the problem really is. The new Colonial Development Act rightly provides half a million a year for research—there is room for sociological and social investigation and even more need for pure



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scientific inquiry into the specific plans to be followed, and remedies to be applied, above all perhaps in preventive medicine, diet and agriculture

The second need is formidable. The colonies sorely lack capital. Torrents of capital went to the making of a few colonies into Dominions, to the making even of the U S A —went, and never came back! Such wealth of capital has never been attracted by the “glittering prizes” of the typical Crown Colonies and Protectorates. Their need is, in fact, not of capital investment as commonly understood, but rather of *funds* to meet the capital and recurring expenditure for the human needs of the people, health and education in all its kinds. Without these, so-called “economic development” is really impossible. We have too long been putting the cart before the horse, in South Africa and elsewhere.

Here is the crux,—the test of our promising 1940 Act. Can Britain finance all the colonies? Will the British taxpayer be willing to, and can he, shoulder the burden alone? Ought he to? Can we get outside international help? Is it not here that the “sacred trust of civilization” may have some relevance? There are many who feel that the colonies,

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"Empire", can be trusted only to an international authority I must digress to speak of the idea put forward often as a general solvent—expressed in a new and dreadful word, "internationalization" !

I will not deal here with what before the war was called *the* "Colonial Question" I would venture to say only that this was a purely European concern—could the colonies be redistributed so as to avert a danger to European peace? It arose directly out of German propaganda—the menace to peace was made in Germany, as we now see We were loudly told by the Germans that we exploited our colonies, at the same time as Germany herself laid plans to exploit them more efficiently herself Very cunningly we were kept in fear of having to fight for countries we did not care very much about, and in a cause that seemed only dog-in-the-manger greed

We were the more flummoxed because so many of us had a guilty conscience, especially about those "landlord" colonies (the only ones we usually heard about—South Africa and its Native problem Kenya land questions, West Indies poverty and distress) These had had nearly all the attention of those who cared about "Native" peoples

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Internationalization got its vogue as a means of saving the threatened peace of Europe. The idea appealed especially to those who felt so strongly our colonial guilt that they hardly tried to improve things, but felt that to share the responsibility would absolve us. I can hardly see myself why it should be more just for weaker peoples to be ruled by a combination of stronger peoples, than by one. I have yet to meet a spokesman of the colonies, one of themselves, who favours the idea of being committed to international rule. There is no guarantee that an international authority will suppress exploitation—the colonial view is always that they would rather have ourselves, with a possibility of some share in partnership. We are more easily dealt with than an international committee, which must necessarily be more aloof, and might, they feel, develop into a mere economic cartel! Hitler has been talking about making Africa the “body” for Europe, and even some internationalists still talk of developing colonial resources for the benefit of the world at large, which means Europe, instead of for the sole benefit of their own peoples. In any case there is no international authority fit and ready to take over—it would

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have to be created. It is fair to say the experiment should be tried and vindicated at home in Europe first, and not begun by committing the affairs of the weaker peoples to an untried authority against which they would have no appeal—far less than they have with us—and washing our hands of the responsibility.

It is true that we have, or had, a Mandate system and a Mandate Commission. Many would make this the starting-point, universalize the Mandate system, develop the Committee, and extend its too limited powers. This is a paper scheme not so easy in practice as it sounds. But, with all respect for the good influence of the Commission, surely the Mandate idea is itself a hang-over from the age of *laissez faire*. In conception the Committee is supervisory and preventive—its job is to see, not that the mandatory does right, actively, but that it does *not* do wrong! It belongs in spirit to the age of that historic and excellent society, the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society—*anti*—a negative, *Aborigines Protection*, a little *de haut en bas*? There is indeed a place for international action, distinct from internationalization. But international co-operation, in the "New Order" we look

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for, must take a positive, constructive part in the colossal work of colonial development—and help to pay for it !

The greatest immediate need we saw is funds. Instead of a supervising Mandates Commission we want a Development Board, or a large number of Development Boards—Public Corporations, open to international subscription ! Dr Julian Huxley has suggested one excellent model—the American T.V.A., whose work is the regeneration of the abused lands of the Tennessee Valley, and of its neglected people. The variety of countries to be served will call for variations of the model. The experience gathered by our Comptroller-General in the West Indies may point to new methods. He is to have funds at his back, and an advisory staff of experts. This is the appropriate field for service and for contributions from nationals of any European or American states that seek a share in responsibility for the colonies. This also is the cure for international rivalry. Scientists, technicians, doctors, social workers, particularly women, administrators for new schemes, will all be needed. Such Boards would work alongside the Colonial Governments and in close consultation with their

Assemblies—which would gain new strength from such association in active work. The State they serve will be the Colony and its welfare their sole concern. This should give new and independent centres of being to the colonies, which would merely be crushed by “international” patronage. Experience acquired in such international co-operation might quite possibly pave the way for an international colonial service—though it must be remembered that colonial civil services must be increasingly staffed by their own educated people, and that the tradition of the service as a corporate body must remain unbroken. It will be necessary in such ways to prepare and build up the units that can be incorporated in a Federal or other Union if and when such develops in the post-war world.

There are, however, also the effects of some former *international* sins of commission to be dealt with. Above all in Africa there are artificial and positively harmful boundary divisions to be adjusted. Not many are so obvious as is the Gambia, a port cut off from its hinterland. Many boundaries follow parallels of latitude and longitude, and cut through tribes. Still more ignore all natural regional divisions, or by their mere existence hinder

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intercourse, sometimes diverting trade from obvious railways to devious roads. The problem calls not for transfer of sovereignty, but for a wiping out of the boundaries altogether and a pooling of resources. Experience or necessity in Europe will point the way. In particular, though national administrations will have to continue, there will have to be a real Customs Union, or series of Unions, to help instead of hindering local trade.

In African regions there is room for an international customs service—some of the yield to go to common purposes—and it would do little harm if this forced certain colonies to rely more on direct taxation for local purposes. This must also mean some drastic change of Imperial Preference, Ottawa Agreements and the like, though it need not and ought not to exclude local arrangements between neighbours like Canada (or America) and the West Indies. Economic arrangements must not be made for the benefit of Europe any more than for the benefit of this country, and the colonies should make their own choice of markets and set their own limitations on imports where the development of internal trade or industry demands them. Internationalism is no solvent, but no hang-over from

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the nationalist age in Europe must be allowed to impede the harmonious economic development of colonial regions or countries. I must repeat that it is wrong to press for "internationalization", and even dangerous in one particular. I have spoken first of economic development, which must be taken to include the educational and medical services necessary for progress in all spheres, economic, political and moral. I have also claimed that British "Imperialism" (if you will) has had some success in the two latter spheres, political and moral, even making real cultural links. West Indians, West Africans and many more share our ideals and aspire to use our political machinery. We may deplore the fact that British rule is severely blamed by Indian leaders like Nehru and Gandhi. We can also claim that British culture has had a modest share in making or bringing out what is best in those great leaders. They speak our spiritual language. The Indian dispute has caused bad blood enough. A break with our tradition, made in anger, would be a major moral disaster for the world. As it is, the leaders do not desire a break with our democratic culture but rather more of it. So it is with the colonies. They are



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not mere outpost camps. Many of them have spiritual and cultural links with us which they cherish with pride and affection—more so, alas, than we do ours with them. These links are real. Established links between peoples of different races are all too rare in this mad world. It is so far only a pious hope that all nations should share the same ideals, but where a common heritage making for peace exists, it should and must be preserved and cherished.

So finally, what advance towards freedom in the political sphere can we look for within the British system? How can we get more effective political control by and on behalf of the colonial peoples, more progress for them in political self-expression?

We have one great advantage over our predecessors, especially those of the last twenty years. We have had proof of the efficacy, almost of the inevitability, of democratic institutions in an emergency like that which we are in to-day. We have recovered something of the nineteenth-century faith in our own "culture". Yet democratic institutions are a feeble and a difficult plant in most colonies, and must be so till cultural development gives the peoples new civic standards. That

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being so, I have consciously insisted on the present "backwardness" of these peoples as a whole. I think I once calculated that only some four per thousand now reach our British compulsory minimum. But that percentage matters out of all proportion, and room and constructive work must be found for them—and much better means of consultation.

The Government machine itself must be improved, and not only or even chiefly at the Whitehall end. Whitehall control is of course "Empire"—and to be modified—but as things are it is often ineffective rather than "restrictive". The modern Colonial Service is a good Service, already very much better than it was even fifteen years ago. But it must be even more broadly based. Till such time as local staffing is much more practicable than it is likely to be for many years, the field of selection at home needs to be widened—and this is true especially of the administrative, so-called "political" branch. Some use might be made of voluntary effort. Junior university staff, and even students, technical, medical or educational—in the West Indies from a great field in America—should be encouraged to give their help, do research, and gain experience in service of the colonial

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peoples It is right and very necessary by all and every means to extend the political rights of the peoples themselves But there is no magic in the cry, "Extend self-government!" if it means we merely stand aside ourselves

For the immediate future ultimate control will inevitably remain outside But if we cannot, at a blow and in the midst of war or victory, democratize Empire, I think we can do something more to inform and enlighten Empire If the colonies cannot at once become self-governing they can at least help the Imperial Parliament to do its work more intelligently The fact that the advance of the Dominions to Commonwealth status was such as to discredit the idea of Imperial Federation hinders progress in this direction But there is much to be said for a swing back, to meet the totally different needs and status of the Crown Colonies, to some loose *centralization* We might profitably follow the old French Republic and have at least some of the leading colonies directly represented in Parliament It may be objected that it is impracticable, especially in wartime, to work out a complete and equitable representation of some fifty different units I think that

that objection falls away if we remember that the aim should be, not to take over or interfere with local administration, but only to guide, instruct and enlighten the Imperial Government itself and give us a sense of the colonies' reality. The alternative is that peace will be made once more, when it is made, over the heads of the colonial peoples and without a word spoken to show how it appears to any of them.

I set store by this suggestion. Even a handful of such colonial representatives at Westminster would, sooner than anything else, give actuality to colonial questions. It would be the surest way of getting the limelight on what goes on there—and the most likely way of ensuring even the necessary *control* of capital. And it will undoubtedly be welcomed, as no other step would, by the colonies themselves, as a move towards partnership—as an assurance of their share in the freedom we look to enjoy. It seems to me a necessary step, or stage, in reconciling the opposites from which we began—the beginning even of a really *free* "Empire."

5

SOCIAL JUSTICE

*By*

ELLEN WILKINSON, M P

## SOCIAL JUSTICE

WE are all of us conscious of certain fundamental differences between this war and the last. In the last war I remember, as those of my generation do, how young friends, mere boys at college, were made up like parcels and sent off to the front, half-trained second-lieutenants, almost chucked into the flames and dead within a few weeks after leaving England. In all the literature that has come out of that war, from Siegfried Sassoon's poems to Sheriff's *Journey's End*, in memoirs, novels and poems, there is this feeling of human recoil from senseless slaughter, from the idea of the Colonel Blimps of all the nations having a grand blood-bath at the expense of youth. I think that was what came out of that war and I think that the men of my generation, who were political rather than conscientious objectors to it, were putting up a fight against something they considered senseless. And the more we look back, the more we feel they were right.

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But we do feel there is a difference in this war and that it is not the result of age that men who were conscientious objectors in the last war are now leading organizers of victory in the present war. For one thing, in spite of the bombing, there has been nothing like that mass slaughter. The nearest to it, of course, is the tragedy of Poland. But as far as Britain and Germany are concerned, not all our air casualties so far put together equal one week of the Battle of the Somme or of Passchendaele, or anything like it. We are conscious that there is much more brain in this war, that it is a war of machinery and intelligence. But we are also aware that the open struggle—the struggle of aeroplanes and fleets and submarines—is only a part of it, like the inevitable simile of the iceberg, there is one-eighth above water and the seven-eighths that matter are underneath.

There is a struggle for power going on, but it is not a struggle for power like it was last time. It is not fundamentally a struggle for territories and for oil. It is a struggle for the control of minds.

After the last war there was a great parceling-out of the undivided-out territories. This war may lead to a change of frontiers, but

it is not fundamentally being fought out for that. Nevertheless, it is a struggle for power, and it is a struggle for colonies in so far as it is on one side a struggle to make the peoples of Europe into a vast colonial area and on the other to save them from that fate.

It is symptomatic that Hitler, in his rise to power, was helped not only by German but by American and British industrialists. Some of them are frightened now and influenced by national interests to take opposite views to those they then held. But the Nazi idea has shown that it has considerable power in every country and that in every country it appeals to very much the same groups in society. There are many ways of looking at the Nazi philosophy, such as it is. There is one very practical way of looking at it, and that is that of the big business men who were behind Hitler when he rose to power and who still have controlling interests in Nazi economic life. It is noteworthy that there has only been one change in the Supreme Economic Council set up by Hitler in 1933. Nazi-ism is the Big Business reply to the unanswerable arguments of Socialism that the era of mass production with its vastly increased scale of productivity must mean, if it is not to lead to utter chaos,



planned organization and an international market. The Nazi alternative to this is, first, the autarchic state, leading not to internationalism but to world domination exercised by that state. It is always possible, and we have seen it happening before our eyes in country after country, that Big Business can come to terms with Hitler, provided that the Germans are willing to share their booty. That is the basis, as we all clearly see, on which the present negotiations between Germany and France are making an appeal to the big business people, and that is one of the reasons why the soldiers don't like it.

I remember very well going over to Paris—I think the year was 1937—with an inter-Parliamentary organization, an all-party gathering of M P s to meet M P s of all parties in the French Parliament, and they gave us dinner and mixed us up. I gathered from the look of my dinner partner that he was not of my general way of thinking. I could tell that by the cut of his jacket. But the Spanish war was raging and I thought in my innocence that I would say something on which to get on common ground. So in my sweetest tones I remarked that, at any rate, the French didn't want the Fascists on their southern frontier,

to which my partner remarked rather tartly "Why not?" They will keep our working class in order, and no one else seems to be able to do it" That was in the days of the *Front Populaire* in France. Someone removed the plate that obscured his card and I saw he was the Comte de Wendel. Spell the name another way and you get the Wendl's of the Rhine and Ruhr. Quite naturally he didn't see the slightest reason why his cousins, the Wendl's, and he, should not come to a perfectly amicable arrangement for a common exploitation of German and French labour. The de Wendels and the Clermont Ferrand crowd were the leading people in the *Croix de Feu* and were subscribers to the Hitler funds. In almost every country—France, Spain, Norway and Belgium (it seems to be much less true of Holland)—the Nazis appeal to the same sort of people—people who stand to gain very substantial economic advantages, or think they do. Some are not quite so sure as the Nazi wave proceeds. With some, of course, national considerations are strong enough to counteract that tendency. It would not be true to say that all big business men are instinctively Nazi—there are a large number who are as horrified at the idea as any of us—but where economic

considerations play a big part, and in so far as it is an understood thing that the German leaders will share the advantages of their conquests rather than swallow the lot, the Nazi idea of the social order always makes a strong appeal to that class in the different countries

What is Britain's position in this set-up? Now, clearly, the British cannot effectively appeal to the same sort of people. Our rulers have tried with the most persistent and no doubt praiseworthy attempts to deal with the *important people* in the different countries, but the Nazis can apparently bid higher, their appeal is, shall we say, more direct to (let us call them) the gangster business type or the gangster aristocratic type, and even when their appeal is not so direct they can, as we have seen in France, frighten where they cannot cajole

In this struggle, where from some points of view the main contestants are so evenly matched, the social idea and the appeal of the social idea must play a much larger part than it has done in previous wars, as a counter to the Nazis. Even in the last war the social idea played a very big part, but we did not emphasize it so much because it was not necessary. Looking back on it all now, we realize that

many Germans who were Social-Democrats, or just plain Democrats, must have felt that they were fighting on the wrong side in the ideological battle, that Britain did stand, as she said she did, for Democracy, and that the Kaiser, whatever else he symbolized, didn't stand for freedom. That feeling seriously weakened the German armies after the early months of war.

But Democracy is not quite the battle call that it was in those days. We realize that just mere political democracy is not enough. We are beginning to doubt whether it can exist without very big fundamental changes. Political democracy is now seen as the flower of social justice, and to attempt to plead for political democracy except it be rooted in social justice is to put a very fine flower, but still a cut flower, in a glass where it may look very well for a time, but where it is not in a position to stand any very great stress. Therefore, it seems to me that if in this war Britain not only is to get the advantage of the democratic appeal that she had in the last war, but also if she is to persuade her own people and the peoples of the world that her name stands for something worth fighting for, then the inevitable step has to be taken that the Socialist

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movement took in the fight for political freedom in the nineteenth century. The reason why the Liberal Party stands to-day as the mere façade of a once great party is its hesitation in the early days of the twentieth century to take the necessary steps to create a system of social justice as a firm pedestal to that statue of political democracy which it undoubtedly had done a very great deal to erect.

I am not going for a moment to apologize for suggesting that we must now think of these things in terms of the war situation. It would be too academic to try and separate the idea of social justice from this life-and-death struggle in which we are engaged. On what, then, does the victory of Britain depend?

It depends, of course, first and foremost, on the endurance and enterprise of our own people, because whatever aid we may get from abroad, and we welcome it from sister democracies, fundamentally the winning of the war is our job.

Secondly, it depends on our ability to appeal to the oppressed nations of the world. It depends on our ability to make those people who are under the Nazi heel realize that this is not just a private fight of the British people, that when we speak of a new

social order we do mean a social order that is really new and not just a return to the old tyranny

In doing that we come to the third point—our ability to capture the imagination of the still free peoples

We are now facing what is the first real winter of this war, and it is no use concealing the fact that it is going to be a grim winter. There is the air-raid damage to be faced and the continual danger that we are all in. I wonder if you feel as I do sometimes, that the continual danger is in itself a tremendous stimulus, but only if we believe it is worth while. When I was in Spain in the early days of that war, I remember three days of very heavy shelling in Madrid, when we were in continual danger the whole time and when I discovered that a front-line trench was a safer place to be in than the main shopping streets of Madrid. I shall never forget the curious feeling of deflation and depression when I got back to bourgeois France. It was not only the danger that was a stimulant, but the sense of being with people who knew what they were fighting for. In this country of ours also, people realize that what they are fighting for and enduring is worth while, and so they

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get the stimulus which is carrying us through, and making London an inspiration to free peoples everywhere who still hate fascism as an evil thing. Among some people we shall have the experience of economic deflation towards the war purpose. Shortage of commodities will contribute to that depression, perhaps even the lack of silk stockings! But we could not turn to war purposes the vast economic machinery of the country and expect to go on as we were without an inevitable rise in prices, and, of course, the pressure is bound to increase as we take the offensive. I am not blind to the facts that we have to face—that there is no easy way to victory in a war like this—and I think that no politician or social or religious leader of any kind is doing a good job for his people or country if he tries to pretend that it is not so.

Therefore, our job is to encourage the endurance of ourselves and our own people and to win the practical support of others. I believe we can only do that in so far as our own victory is associated with the triumph of an ideal. It seems to me quite incredible that so many good people, just as they imagine that the whole God-head idea is the private property of the Church of England, should really and

truly feel that it would be a privilege on the part of other nations to face death and danger for the sake of the British Empire. I suppose that is why, in the early days of the war, some bright group, was it the British Council?, sent out an expedition to the Balkans to explain the real ideals of this country, with pictures of Oxford colleges and the cricket teams of the higher forms of our more exclusive public schools. The "museum classes" of Britain cannot prepare the conditions of victory in this war—it is a tougher job than that. But throughout the centuries there has been an ideal for which the mass of people have endured torture and exile in every country, and that is the ideal of social justice. We can go back a long way to the Greek cities and the Spartacist revolt in Rome, and so on through the centuries of European history. But to go back no further than the French Revolution, there you had a people torn by internal dissent, ruined by taxation. Its upper classes were either in prison or else with the invader. The people themselves were almost without arms, without military organization. And yet they were pulled through to great victories. The thing that pulled that country through and sent them as welcome conquerors across Europe



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was the ideal of *Liberté, Egalité et Fraternité*. To-day a defeated France is the France of the de Wendels, the *grand patronats*, of all those who fought against the modest reforms of the *Front Populaire*, who would rather see their country go down than give a reasonable working week and a decent minimum wage and a moderate system of social insurance. Those of us who know and love the France of the working class know that that great country with those ideals in the souls of the people will rise again—those ideals are not to be signed away by a man like Laval. It cannot be done. But they must find a rallying-point, and the sense that the British working class is convinced that in fighting this war it is securing a regime of social justice will be the best and the quickest means of rallying that magnificent French working class to our cause and to their own cause.

I have spoken of social justice. I think it is time to define it. Basically, it is equality. Just as the basis of the Christian religion in the great slave-owning days was its preaching of the equality of all men, slaves or freemen, before God, so the foundations of the social stability of the European tradition as it has developed through the centuries have been

laid on the doctrine of the equality of man before the law. But, as I have said, real equality cannot exist in law only, any more than it can exist in politics only, if you have economic inequality. It is perfectly true that in theory one of the dockers from the bombed dock areas of London can take his wife and children to a luxury hotel in Windermere and leave them there with the wife and children of a great industrialist. That he can do in law, but we can all think of a number of restrictions which, in fact, prevent that desirable state of affairs. To a very large extent, probably to a larger extent than anywhere in the world now, legal and political equality exist in this country, and these have stood us in very good stead. But real power in Britain has receded to the background. In this country, just as in the others, economic power in these days of large-scale production is decisive. The fight against political privilege we thought was won. But to-day even the legal and political privileges that were won on paper are thrown once again into the arena of struggle, because political equality and economic inequality cannot exist side by side.

What exactly do we mean by equality in relation to social justice? Here I put in

parenthesis that we must not confuse social justice with an alms-giving state, for I have always thought that such a conception of Socialism was thoroughly bad. I think that was the mistake made, certainly by the German working class, and to some extent by the Italian, previous to the Fascist regime. The Social-Democratic and Communist parties in Germany—and they were both tarred with the same brush—made the mistake of thinking that you could go on endlessly demanding alms from a capitalist state without in fact being prepared to take the responsibility of power. That is why a country where more than half the whole population were members of either Socialist or Communist parties allowed an impotent puppet like von Papen to dismiss the democratic regime on 20 July 1932. If you exert pressure on the capitalist system and on the capitalists within that system to give more than they consider possible, it leads inevitably to Fascism, which is their method under existing circumstances of hitting back. A demand for equality must carry with it not a demand for more and more and more alms-giving, but the demand for power and the responsibility that goes with power.

After this clearing of the ground we may

now look again at the main problem Do we by social justice mean equality of income? As an ultimate ideal, I should say clearly Yes But as an immediate step, the Russians, who did not make the mistake of thinking that you could go on with alms-giving, did try the experiment of a mathematical equality of income, at any rate within the dominant party in the state, and they found it did not work We have the old English Socialist formula—from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs—and that may serve as an intermediate formula But I think the germ of the right idea is to divorce social status from income The Russians tried out this idea when they found that the mathematical equality of income was a failure They gave to the communist functionary higher social consideration though his income might be lower than that of the manual worker Where you can thus divorce social consideration from income the danger of inequality is not so great, and social justice can exist even with actual difference in money incomes I think that in any decent state founded on social justice equality of income would seem to be the most obvious basis, but whether this exists or not I think you will agree that there can be no social

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justice and no equality of any real kind if the sources of economic power are concentrated in a few hands, especially if those few have no ultimate responsibility to the community except the payment of their taxes

I must now give some of the facts of inequality in Britain, because they really do point the moral of what I have been trying to say, that without some kind of economic equality you cannot get social justice

Taking the 1929 figures, 17½ million out of 20 million incomes in this country were under £250 a year and nearly 12 million were under £125 a year

One and a half per cent of the population took 23 per cent of the total personal incomes (1929-35)

In 1860 wage-earners took 55 per cent of the national income, in 1935 they took only 40 per cent.

In the 1924-30 period—six years—6 per cent of the population held 80 per cent of the property in this country and under 2 per cent of the population held 40 per cent

These vast economic inequalities are senseless. From every point of view they are utterly indefensible and utterly bad. I have sat with these figures in my mind during debates in

the House of Commons, and noticed with amusement that by the time the incomes of that six per cent have been explained away, as they were once brilliantly explained away by Mr Snowden in his later and unregenerate days, the net result was that the community owed the poor rich quite a lot of money. Of course if you capitalize the death duties and then reckon insurance on them as annual taxation, you can prove lots of things. Yet the fact that six per cent of the people own eighty per cent of the property is not just a regrettable incidental to capitalist prosperity. It does not really matter from the national point of view whether a lady can afford 100 pairs of gossamer silk stockings or whether a man can eat strawberries out of season (which is a very depraved taste, because they are nasty). It is the economic power that he controls that is decisive.

This is where we get into the realm not of personal luxury, but of national safety. Consider the effect of, say, National Shipbuilders' Securities Ltd, the steel ring, the cement ring. What does it mean to the nation that these people control that amount of property? What can they do to the ordinary people who do not? It means, for example, that in the

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years 1932-9, those years when the Imperial General Staff were of opinion that Britain was likely to be faced with a major war within ten years, National Shipbuilders' Securities Ltd, under Sir James Lithgow, were able to close one-third of the shipbuilding berths of this country, and not only close them, but render them sterile for forty years by legal bans. It was done methodically. They sold shipbuilding machinery abroad, a good deal of it to Germany, and then at the end left us to face a terrific submarine onslaught with less ships and only two-thirds of the replacement capacity than we had in 1914, and, what was also serious, with less skilled labour power than we had in 1914.<sup>1</sup> The shipbuilding ring was able to devastate whole communities like Jarrow, where you had a thriving town dependent on one industry, with not a decaying shipyard, but a very up-to-date one. That town was doomed to economic extinction, and the whole of its social services waterlogged with the vast poverty problem consequent on the decision to destroy Palmer's shipyard.

One of the minor advantages of office is that

<sup>1</sup> I dealt with this in my Left Book Club book, *The Town that was Murdered*, as it affected Jarrow in detail.

you have opportunities to meet the villains of the piece. In the course of my work in the first office I held in this Government I was able to meet my own particular villain, and that was Sir James Lithgow. We sat down to argue the matter out, and I found him a very pleasant but hard-headed Scotsman. It was not a walkover for either side. We went at it hammer and tongs for a solid hour. But we were not talking the same economic language, because the attitude of Sir James Lithgow was "I have got to make my business pay—my job is to provide dividends for my shareholders, the consequences of these actions on the community are no concern of mine." The social consequences of his action *are* no concern of his in the present social system. His job is to make his business pay and to provide his shareholders with dividends, and of course on this basis you can build up an absolutely hard, logical case, as Sir James Lithgow did. You can do it in the case of the cement ring, where much the same procedure was followed, buying up firms not immediately making money and rationalizing any other concerns. The iron and steel combine, right up to the beginning of the war, opposed new methods of producing



steel which were seized upon by Germany, because they wanted to give dividends on stock on which they had not been able to pay dividends for the previous twenty years

Granted the premise that their job is to provide dividends, the whole case put up by the industrialists follows logically step by step, entirely ignoring the results of their work in terms of social justice and of national safety Sir James Lithgow thinks that to talk of social justice is to endanger national safety I am not attacking him as the sole villain According to accepted standards he is a hard-working asset to the nation But he links national welfare with the prosperity of one particular class, while we have to think of it in terms of social justice If you are to face this problem, it seems to me utterly impossible to build a basis for social justice except on the control of the major economic forces of the state by the community Even in the Fascist countries it has been recognized that finance and big industry should no longer be the irresponsible forces that they were allowed to be in the nineteenth century The question, therefore, is whether they are going to be controlled in the interests of the state and nation, or in the interest of some small economic group

Having got that control into national hands, and that is the crux of the problem, the next basic pillar of social justice is economic security for the worker. Without that no possible economic reforms can give real social justice or real social equality. If the only thing that stands between starvation and the workhouse for one's family is a week's notice or an hour's notice, then political equality or legal equality become simply a mockery. I feel we have not in the recent past emphasized that quite strongly enough. We have rather got away from the emphasis that Keir Hardie put on the right to work or maintenance. By social insurance we have given a basis of economic security to the worker that he has not enjoyed in history before as an independent proletarian, but there must be more adequate provision made for those for whom work cannot be found, so as not to deprive families of all advantages possible and so as to maintain the standards of those who are at work. The recent abolition of the Household Means Test will help towards this end.

So it seems to me, therefore, that we cannot just look and plan for the future as something that has no connection with what we are doing now. We are doing a very great deal towards

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getting the control of the economic life of this country into the hands of the State, even though actual ownership remains in private hands. It is obviously true that in the first year this war was run as a private interests war. Many employers of labour, and for that matter certain skilled unions, did not think they were being in any way unpatriotic or unreasonable when they considered national demands in terms of what was going to happen to their particular industry after the war. If they extended their plant or their ranks too much, would they be left with a mass of redundant plant or labour when the war was over? It really needed Hitler's blitzkrieg to knock some sense into certain heads belonging both to employers and to workers. Then they began to wake up to the obvious fact that if they did not put forth the effort required of them there would be no after the war for them at all.

We have got now to the position where money, in this as in all belligerent countries, externally at any rate, has become a mathematical expression. Not that if you told that to the income-tax man it would get you very far. But in running a war of this magnitude, the problem cannot be considered in terms of money at all.

If you are planning deep shelters, you don't now think in terms of what a deep shelter is going to cost. You have to consider how many tons of cement will be available in a given time, how many tons of steel can be released, how many skilled tunnellers can be obtained. These are the terms which limit the particular kind of shelter that you are going to erect.

In war, therefore, we organize for the needs of the people rather than in terms of dividends or money, and the same thing applies—very much applies—when you are dealing with the centralized control of financial operations. But the point I want to emphasize is that these things are being done now, as it were, apologetically. They are being hidden away. We almost apologize to the manufacturer whose work we have to requisition, and therefore we don't get, even in our own country, the full moral effect of the measures that have actually been taken. We are certainly not in any international sense getting what you might call moral results for the measures that have been carried through, because those measures are being taken on the one hand and agreed to on the other with a kind of subconscious agreement that this is all right for the war, but after the war things will have to go back to where they were.

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before That is not the basis on which it seems to me you can build for victory in this war, either a victory worth having or a victory likely to come The only way in which you can get that dynamic drive—the steam in the engine—that will carry us through, is by creating the sense that a new order is being built amid the stress of war It is not just a question of endurance, of staying put and going through with the bombing, of going short of food and sleeping God knows where Endurance alone cannot bring victory It can at best only bring a position of stalemate We are not out to win the war over the Germans as a nation We are out to smash this idea that is crushing the life out of the free-minded peoples of this country and theirs

If we are going to get the necessary dynamic force and get the free peoples of the world behind us, the only hope for the future is to apply ourselves to the task and make freedom a reality in our own country We must say that the social justice which I have rather sketchily outlined is the thing that we are fighting for and building and that it is the thing that the people of Britain stand for

Whatever certain aristocratic or financial groups may want this country to fight for,

I believe that such a revolution of ideas can alone supply the fervour necessary to win through the war to a peace that will endure. Without it we may see the way through to a very dark and uncertain future for us all.

As I go round bombed London and as my work takes me to every nook and corner where houses and factories have been levelled and where some of the loveliest of ancient things have been broken, I don't get any heartrending feeling about that, because if we can keep the people all right, if we can get the people through and if we can give the children a chance, then out of the bricks and mortar, out of the very rubble of destroyed buildings, we can build something infinitely lovelier than the best of what we have lost. It would not take long to build something very much better than the worst.

6

A SOCIALIST CIVILIZATION

*By*

G D H COLE

## A SOCIALIST CIVILIZATION

THE problem that I am called upon to face in this concluding lecture is that of discussing the tasks that are before us in our attempt to build a Socialist civilization

In approaching that task, on what basis are we to begin, either by way of destruction or by way of building upon existing institutions that seem worth preserving and worth the attempt to adapt them to the needs of the new society? The most obvious characteristics of the civilization which is now tearing itself to pieces by war, the characteristics that we have either to build upon or to destroy, if we can destroy them, because they stand in the way of a new and decent civilization, are, first and foremost, I think, the following

In the first place, it has become clear from the history of recent years that nationalism, the nationalist spirit, if it is taken as the guiding spirit in the construction of civilized societies and embodied in sovereign Nation States, turns irresistibly into imperialism and



destroys the world with war. Small nationalities have no power so to destroy the world, but we cannot uphold the spirit of nationality and the Nation State without upholding great as well as small nationalities, and great national states, more powerful than their neighbours, will attempt to destroy those neighbours. Nationalism will not work as a basis for a new order. It will lead to a repetition of wars, and any attempt to rebuild Europe after this war on the basis of the Nation State cannot be successful, it will be bound to lead to further wars. Nor is the attempt likely to succeed even temporarily, class-conflict cuts across nationality, as in Pétain's France to-day, too powerfully for merely national reconstruction to be even possible.

Secondly, we find our world dominated by an extremely rapid tempo of technical and scientific advance, which masters more and more the arts of production and increases enormously the necessary scale of economic organization. But in that mastery of the arts of production two very different things happen. When these arts are directed to raising the standard of life—to making more abundant the goods that are required for decent living—almost every advance in technical efficiency

comes hard up against the fear of the profit-maker that plenty may destroy his profit, so that far and wide the satisfaction of human wants is inhibited by one form after another of restrictive monopoly. Monopolies hold back the development of inventions, monopolies put "surplus capacity", as it is called, out of business, monopolies prevent the increase in material wealth which is easily possible on the basis of man's rapidly developing command over nature. But, as against this, when these great technical forces are directed not to making things that will render men happier and wealthier and healthier but to the arts of destruction, there are no such monopolistic influences to stand in their way. The one market which has no point of satiety, the one market in which the more that is sold the greater is the unsatisfied demand, is the market for armaments. The more and the dearer armaments one country has the more armaments others want to buy. Therefore destructive power advances much faster than constructive power, and the world is in danger, by virtue of the very cleverness of its inventors and discoverers, of making more efficient the instruments of its own devastation.

With that comes the point that these

growing forces of production unloose upon men a new slavery to the machine. This is of course a familiar point, and Herbert Read made it excellently in his lecture. Under existing conditions, the more men learn to mass-produce goods, the more they become the slaves of monotonous machine processes, and the narrower becomes the range over which the exercise of high craftsmanship is called for. The higher ranges of skill become confined to a much smaller proportion of the total labour force. The virtues of individuality which are characteristic of the artisan using his tools in his own way, and adopting his own methods of solving the difficulties of production, become the monopoly of a small aristocracy of technicians and super-skilled craftsmen, and for the great mass of the workers there is simply the task of serving the machine, of churning out more and more goods up to the point at which it suits the monopolist to stop production—and beyond that point, of course, there ensues unemployment. The worker is forced to produce as fast as he can, he is subjected to a new discipline of swift monotonous production, but under these conditions of high individual output and low collective output, restricted by monopoly,

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unemployment becomes not an epidemic disease of certain phases of the trade cycle, but something endemic, and we witness the absurd spectacle of modern communities unable year after year to make adequate use of the productive resources that lie ready to their hands

Added to all this is the tremendous extension of the market, the extension of the facilities of communication, that are also products of modern technical advance. This extension of the market, this growth of world-wide communications, leads to the necessity of forms of economic organization which were not contemplated at all when our present machinery of government was brought into existence. Capitalism creates economic instruments which are quite beyond the powers of our existing instruments of government, and, above all, of our democratic instruments, to control, problems are posed on a scale upon which there is no machinery for solving them, and there develops a discrepancy between the scale on which men are equipped for making collective decisions and the colossal scale on which the decisions have to be made if democracy is to have any meaning in world affairs

I have stressed already the extent to which the nineteenth-century position has been reversed. In the nineteenth century it was, on the whole, true that capitalism, juggernaut as it was, riding roughshod over human susceptibilities and individualities, did make for higher standards of living and did increase the quantity of goods produced at an enormous rate. But twentieth-century capitalism has not even that defence. Twentieth-century capitalism everywhere, in every country, has become more and more monopolistic and restrictive. In all the capitalist States the outstanding feature of economic development during the past twenty years has been the creation of huge monopolies, whose main purpose is to prevent additions to the productive resources that are employed, and to regulate the output of those productive resources which are already in operation.

Finally, among the facts which we have to face in the building of our new order, there is Harold Nicolson's point that democracy has "run to fat". Somehow the institutions of democracy—of very imperfect democracy, but of a sort of democracy all the same—which men spent blood and energy in building up in the nineteenth century, have not

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achieved the results which were expected from them. Somehow the forces of revolt against the old order, having secured some share in the control of the State, in the exercise of political and economic power, have ceased to be forces of revolt seeking the speedy overthrow of the old order, and have become to some extent involved in the maintenance of the existing productive relationships and in the existing economic and political machine.

To take a very obvious example, can we feel that the trade union movement is pressing as hard as it could towards the abolition of capitalism? Have we not often come to feel rather that the trade unions would not quite know what to do if there were no capitalists for them to negotiate with? Trade union spokesmen know all about the task of driving a collective bargain with employers' representatives over wage-rates and hours of labour, that is a familiar technique. The trade union official knows it as well as the rank and file trade union member knows how to operate the machine which he has been trained to work. The trade union official has served an apprenticeship to his negotiating job, he is a skilled workman at it. What would he be good for if that job were suddenly

to disappear? This is merely an instance of a tendency which extends far beyond the trade union movement—of an intense conservatism in the preservation of the techniques which men have learned, of an intense reluctance to face the learning of new and difficult techniques. This reluctance extends to a very large part of the democratic machine. The democratic political machine, as well as the democratic industrial machine, has been hitherto a machine for getting jobs done under capitalism, for exacting certain kinds of social reform from the existing system, for representing the immediate grievances of the lower class. What would the democratic politician do if there were no lower class whose grievances he could represent? His occupation would be gone. The kind of leader who is built up inside a society based on class antagonisms softened by parliamentary institutions, who is habituated to protesting, to representing the grievances of the underdogs, and to getting done about 5 per cent of what he asks for (which is a good deal more than nothing), would find himself in a totally different atmosphere and called upon for totally different qualities and for the exercise of totally different powers if it were

no longer a question of asking for a great deal more than he expected to get and then being content with a small proportion of it, but of substituting a radically different order of society for the order which now exists. The difficulty of democratic organizations and parties everywhere is the difficulty of crossing that particular bridge, of crossing over from being a party of protest, expecting to make only gradual changes, and to get a concession here and a concession there, to being a party called upon to construct swiftly a quite different kind of society. In the building of our Socialist civilization, that is the greatest of all our problems. Can we turn our reformist, social democratic parties, which are in fact, whatever their professions, organs of protest, instruments for the extraction of gradual social reforms, into instruments for the creation of a new social order?

As we watch our Labour Ministers inside the present Cabinet struggling with their problems, we can see that this dilemma is at present facing them very plainly. Such a man as Herbert Morrison or Ernest Bevin finds himself put to work a certain departmental machine. He has before him the vision of certain jobs that need to be done,



but whenever he says that he wants to make any major change, a dozen senior officials will explain to him a dozen difficulties that stand in the way of what he wants. He is surrounded by civil servants who are men not of ill will but of routine, and they say to him "This is how we have always done it before, and it would create great difficulties if we had to do it differently just now, while there is a war on, and it is so important to avoid all unnecessary dislocation."

The Minister who proposes major changes will be respectfully admonished by one senior official of his department after another. He will be memoranded—of course through the correct hierarchy, in which the memorandum comes circulating slowly round by way of many officials. All the technical difficulties which stand in the way of doing the apparently simple thing that he is calling upon his department to do will be elaborately set out. If he once starts examining all those difficulties he will find that there is a great deal in them. Cumulatively they will appear to be very formidable, and unless he is a very determined man he will be completely smothered by the accumulation of small obstacles and totally unable to get any major change made. As

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long as he consents to look first at the details and come back to the principles afterwards, he will get nothing important done in any difficult situation, because the mass of details will always be so great and the secondary adjustments needed so numerous that he will not be able to see any way through. In a situation in which radical changes are required, the only way in which a Minister, or anyone else, can get them made is by keeping his mind firmly upon certain basic principles and saying to his subordinates "You are going to get these principles carried into effect and the details are somehow going to be adjusted, however much your customary routine may be disturbed, your habits uprooted, and your sense of fitness outraged by my unreasonable hustle."

The great weakness of most of our democratically trained leaders is that they find it hard to look at their problems in that way. They have been used to thinking in terms of details rather than of ultimate purposes, and it is exceedingly difficult for them suddenly to change the habits of a lifetime and say "Now I must put all the details out of my head and stick to the big things that fundamentally need doing." In revolutionary

situations that is how people have to act—or fail. They find that they have to make certain radical changes of principle, and then they have somehow to create an administrative machine which will carry their principles into effect. In that process a lot of bones get broken, and a great deal of disorganization occurs. Nevertheless, in revolutions men have to face their problems in this spirit, and the details do get adjusted somehow, or the revolution fails.

I realize, of course, that our Labour Ministers took office at a time when we could not afford immediate dislocation, when the problem was to stave off the danger of instant attack, to make good the losses due to the French collapse, and to produce as much war material as possible in the next few weeks in order that the front might be re-formed. I make no complaint at all about our Ministers because they did not make any drastic innovation during the weeks that immediately followed the Dunkirk evacuation. For the moment, they were compelled to face the immediate problems without attempting to institute radical changes. But now that particular emergency is past (I think we can agree that it is past). Now, our Ministers

are confronted by a situation in which they can advance no further by tackling things in detail, in which they have to work for a radical change in the whole organization of economic policy in this country before they can hope to get Great Britain either effectively organized for war or heading towards that Socialist civilization which we aim at as the basis of post-war reconstruction. At this present moment, in the debates inside the Cabinet, by the reactions of Attlee, Greenwood, Morrison, Bevin, Alexander—all the Labour Ministers—to this new phase upon which we are now entering, it is being decided whether the Labour Party will prove itself capable of founding a new Socialist civilization in this country, or will demonstrate its incapacity to get away from the detailed issues, over which it will be inevitably defeated, to the root principles of effective social and economic reorganization.

What are the principles which Bevin and Morrison and the other Labour Ministers should have in mind when they are confronting their major tasks inside the Government? What kind of Socialist civilization should they try to bring about, and at any rate to lay the foundations of during the war? They

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*could* take as their model either of two systems which are actually in existence in the world to-day. They *could* take the economic system of the Soviet Union, or they *could* take the economic system of Nazi Germany. These are two working models of twentieth-century ways of social organization which are actually working, and they both differ from the ways of living to which we are accustomed in this country in that they are based on twentieth-century, and not on nineteenth-century, technique. We, on the other hand, are still living under institutions which were set up and continue to be administered in the light of nineteenth-century technique, nineteenth-century notions, and nineteenth-century ways of life. Both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, whether we like them or not, have been conceived basically in terms of the economic conditions, the underlying powers of production, existing in the twentieth century. It would be possible for our statesmen here to make up their minds that the best thing they could do would be to try to bring about in Great Britain a full Communist form of organization such as the Russians have been attempting to build up, based on an omnipotent State which would take over

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and direct all the instruments of production, based on a complete destruction of the bourgeoisie, and a new class-structure which would know no classes of the old sort but, if it had classes or class divisions at all (and that, of course, its creators would deny), would rest them not on property or inheritance but on the exercise of function, on the importance of the contribution that this man or that man was making to the common cause. Our statesmen *could* set to work to build a civilization of that sort, conscious that it could be built only after a terrific struggle against our own vested interests and a terrific holocaust of habits of living that are deeply engrained in my being and yours, in the whole British middle class and in a large part of the British working classes as well.

Or, on the other hand, our statesmen *could* take the Nazi State as their model, and seek to build up a State-controlled economic system which would leave capitalist property still in being but subordinate the exercise of capitalist rights to the over-riding rights of the State, allowing the capitalists to retain their property and their incomes from property subject to their doing the things which the State wants them to do, producing the goods

which the State wants them to produce, employing the persons whom the State wants them to employ, investing their capital where the State wishes it to be invested, and so on. Our leaders *could* say that we had better try to establish a State-controlled capitalism, based on a system of economic planning, on making all the classes in society fit together in terms of a general social plan which the State would dictate. That is the ideal of State-controlled capitalism.

Of course, there is a great deal besides that in Nazi Germany. There is, for instance, the persecution of the Jews. But I can imagine someone in this country—perhaps a rich Jew—saying to himself: “There is nothing necessarily anti-Semitic in the idea of State-planned capitalism, we can throw overboard that bit of Nazism. The rest looks good to me.” Again, the Nazi system is definitely planned for wars of conquest, that is the whole intention of the State plan which has been built up in Germany since the Nazis came to power. But I can imagine an Englishman saying to himself: “There is nothing inherently necessary in that particular aspect of State-planned capitalism. Why should not we have a State-planned capitalism which will

beat its swords into ploughshares and aim at higher production, controlled production, over the whole of the economic field ? Why should we not work out a State plan of abundance, which will preserve the difference between ranks and classes, so that there will be a sufficient abundance for the poor and a greater abundance for the upper classes ? ” It is possible to imagine a State-capitalist society which would be neither anti-Semitic, rabidly nationalist and “ Aryan ”, nor planned with a view to predatory action at the expense of other peoples

There you have two working models The one is a model of a completely State-run economic system, in which the State takes over the ownership of all the basic industries, and all the control of the way in which those industries are to be run , in which the State becomes the director of further technical advance, the means of applying mass production to the full and of using all the latest scientific discoveries for the purpose of increasing the total volume of output , in which the State aims primarily at raising the standard of living of the people by these means

It is true that this is not precisely the Soviet



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model as it exists , for under existing conditions the Soviet Union is postponing the outpouring of plenty upon the people, and is forcing the pace of industrial organization to prepare for the contingency of war with capitalist Powers rather than to improve immediately the condition of its citizens But my point remains

That is one ideal—the ideal that there should be built up a completely State-run society in which the State would be the controller and the embodiment of the new technical forces of mass production and enforce the development of these powers upon the whole people Over against that, there is the alternative model, based on the conception of a capitalism controlled and dominated by a powerful State machine which, without abolishing property rights or economic distinctions, would compel every subject to subserve a general economic and political plan

I dislike both those models of twentieth-century organization I dislike anything that subordinates the individual as completely to the machine as do both Communism and State Capitalism in the forms in which we see them at work in the world to-day I felt intense sympathy with Herbert Read

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when he protested against such societies. But deeply as I dislike these Leviathans, deeply as I want to live in a social environment which leaves large scope for diversity and individual and group initiative and is not all shut up within a basic uniformity prescribed by the State, I have always to remind myself that I am, after all, living not in Utopia, but in twentieth-century Europe, and that the technical developments of the twentieth century render certain models of social organization which one can conceive in one's mind visionary utopias for us and for our time. The very situation prescribes certain basic principles on which any society that has a chance of survival under twentieth-century conditions has to be founded. The characteristics of centralized planning and control which are common to Nazi Germany and to the Soviet Union are not accidents—they are the direct outcome of certain technical conditions, and are indispensable, in some measure, to any twentieth-century society that is to rest on solid foundations. They have to be accepted as part of the order of our universe—upon them we have to build as best we can, being the possessors of great scientific powers which we have not yet learned the art of controlling.

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and subordinating to the nobler human desires

Given man as he is, given these forces as they are, it is inevitable that any society capable of standing the test of the struggle for existence under twentieth-century conditions shall have built into its very foundations this common element of centralized planning and control that exists both in Nazi Germany and in the Soviet Union. We have to assume a large-scale, planned social order, we have to assume that the control of the uses made of the major powers of production will be in the hands of a central authority, we have to assume that the great majority of men will have to work within the limits set by this great machine, and we have to admit that any attempt to build a society that does not accept these basic conditions is doomed to failure. If we try, in the name of liberty, in the name of individuality, in the name of anything else that we hold dear, to stand in the way of the development of these great technical forces, we shall be doing nothing to build a new democratic order that will have in it the elements of victory and of stability.

This means that we cannot restore, even if we would, either the old capitalism or the

old objectives of Labour Parties or Social Democratic Parties which expected capitalism to stay steady while they modified its evil social consequences, to continue in effective operation while they gradually got ready to supersede it, and to consent to be superseded as fast as they could persuade people to pass laws restraining it from doing this or that, and establishing little bits of semi-Socialism here and there. We have to take it for granted that the new order must be a highly centralized and basically planned order in its method of handling all the essential services, and that the foundations of this new order must be laid at once. I say this, not because I like it, but because it is true, and it does not matter whether I like it or not. But, having said it, I go on to ask what chance there is within this new order of saving whatever has been valuable and remains valuable in the civilization which was gradually built up under capitalism in the course of the nineteenth century, and is now visibly tottering to its fall.

Nineteenth-century capitalism, after all, had very considerable values. If we compare the lives of men at the end of the nineteenth century with their lives a century before, we cannot but see that capitalist development

did carry with it a very great advance in material welfare, in the average health of the people, in longevity, and in the chance of a man looking back on life and feeling that it had been worth while. Capitalism carried these things with it because it unloosed new powers of production and made effective use of them up to a point. Men were, on the whole, immensely better off in a material sense in 1900 than they had been in 1800. They were better off, even if we discount the habit of the advocates of capitalism of claiming credit for partially abolishing the very evils which capitalism had created at an earlier stage. Capitalism created the Manchester slums and when, at the end of the nineteenth century, it began to pull a few of them down, its advocates claimed great credit for this, and forgot to remind people that it had created them earlier in its career. But, when we have discounted all that, and made full allowance for the evils created by capitalism as well as for other evils which men under nineteenth-century capitalism had begun to remedy, it remains true that standards of living advanced, that infant mortality fell, and that the average working-class man or woman at fifty years of age was physically

and spiritually ten years younger at the end of the nineteenth century than in the early days of the industrial revolution. These were real victories which we must wish to conserve. But that is not my main point.

My main point is that, side by side with those material victories of the nineteenth century, there were victories of the human spirit. Above all other victories, I think I should place the increase of human tolerance, the victory that meant a narrowing of the sphere in which men believed uniformity of conduct to be necessary to living together in a common society. Through the past century the sphere of freedom was being continually enlarged, in the sense that individuals or groups were able more and more to break loose from an imposed uniformity of conduct. A great deal was due to nonconformity in religion and to the fact that the nonconformists in religion, in asserting their right to differ in that particular sphere, their right to build their own chapels in which they could worship God in their own way, were driven at the same time to defend many freedoms quite outside the religious sphere, and to assert that people had a right to behave as they chose so long as there were no over-

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mastering social or moral reasons for insisting on uniformity

That liberation of diversity—of the right to differ—had to contend against great economic forces which were making in the direction of monotony and uniformity. The growth of the machine, enforcing a common practice of routine operation on great masses of men, was driving in the direction of uniformity of behaviour and conduct. Standardization of many of the arts of life was driving, to a certain extent, in the same direction. But much more important than these forces making in the direction of standardization was the enlargement that was taking place in the freedom of men to differ in their ways of thought and expression and in the kind of lives they chose to lead outside the period of hours during which they were under the direct control of the monster machine. That kind of diversity, and the tolerance which alone makes it possible in a community which means to go on living together as a community, is one of the values of nineteenth-century capitalism which I, at any rate, want to preserve. But how far can we preserve that tolerance, that right to live our own lives, that right to behave in different ways, under the conditions which

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now face us—the conditions which impose upon us centralized planning and control as sheer necessities if we are to survive at all ?

This is the great question that confronts us in building our Socialist civilization for to-morrow. The Communists obviously threw away a great deal that was good when they made their revolution. Making it against an old order far more reactionary than ours, and under much more difficult conditions, because they were badly lacking in skilled man-power, in technicians and organizers of every sort, and faced by a terrible ignorance and lack of civilization, bred of long oppression, among their people, they were compelled to insist on a degree of uniformity in conduct and behaviour and, above all, on a degree of uniformity in thought, without which their attempt to build a new social system could hardly have succeeded at all. They had to be all Marxists together, they had to inculcate a common philosophy and, to a large extent, a common way of behaviour, because that was the means of giving solidarity and unity of direction to the new society which they were trying to consolidate. As against that, we in Western Europe start with enormous advantages—with an abundance of technicians



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of every kind and with an abundance of persons used to some measure of freedom and responsibility who possess the qualities of competence and education needed for carrying out the essential tasks of Socialist construction. We possess also a tradition of getting along together somehow even when we differ, of not enlarging differences on one point into differences on all points, of not dividing ourselves into sects that cannot play football together because they cannot agree about politics. That is a valuable tradition which lives among us and will make all the difference if we can reconcile it with wholehearted endeavour in the building of a new society. The doubt is whether this very tolerance, this very habit of not quarrelling about everything because we quarrel about politics, is part of the "fatty degeneration of democracy", as the Nazis would teach us to believe, or is a quality of civilized living, which men can preserve, and at the same time act in forthright fashion in adapting it to the needs of a radically different social order.

What fundamentally differentiates us, who belong to the Fabian Society and to the Labour Party, from Communists and from all who believe that the new civilization can be

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built only by a sharp break with the old traditions, not only in politics but in everything else as well, is the belief that it is possible to build the new society without throwing overboard those values which are our heritage from the past, developed under a capitalism which once allowed room for them to grow, but now, in its new monopolistic phase, has shown its incapacity to sustain them, or to yield to us anything further of the same order of value. We Fabians believe that it is possible to carry over into the new society values developed under the old order, but not inseparably bound up with nineteenth-century ways of conducting our economic affairs. We believe that it is possible to build a Socialist civilization without throwing overboard all the institutions that grew up under capitalism, good and bad alike. We believe that we need cast away only those things which necessarily belong to a capitalist society and are not capable of being adapted to the needs of a Socialist society. We believe, however, that, while this can be done, there is no certainty that it will be done. If we have to choose between a vast sacrifice of these older values, a vast sacrifice of the things that we believe to be good in

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the society in which we are now living, and our desire to construct a new, Socialist civilization, there is no doubt which way our choice should go. We should be prepared to sacrifice all these existing values if need be, but if we can create the new society without that sacrifice it will be an infinitely better society and will be built with far less human suffering, and with far fewer growing pains of transition, than if we have to tear everything down first, and then begin building up again amid the ruins of all our habits and traditional standards.

I can imagine such people as Morrison and Bevin struggling in their own minds between their desire to preserve existing values and their desire to move forward towards a new society, struggling all the time with the difficulty that, whenever they attempt to move forward, they find themselves confronted with an immense mass of little obstacles that present themselves not merely as obstacles, but also as the embodiments of values deserving of respect. I can imagine Morrison and Bevin facing the prospect that, if they do persist in moving forward to the new society against these obstacles, they may, by prising men loose from their established notions and

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ways of life, set in motion tremendously dangerous new impulses and break up the old society without any assurance of their ability to create the new. I can imagine them hesitating, even while the hope of Socialism hangs upon their decision.

Looking back on the events of the past few months, I cannot help thinking that we have emerged successfully from a terribly critical test. It was a touch-and-go situation. If it had been possible for Germany, after the collapse of France, to press her advantage home immediately, and to throw all her forces at this country without one instant's delay, there was such a condition of disorganization that we might well have had to echo Reynaud's words that "only a miracle could save France." Reynaud went on to say that he believed in miracles. I do not. But the blow was delayed, and what showed itself thereafter was a great and immediate resilience of the British people, a resilience that came in the main not from the top but from right down below. We had then the curious spectacle of trade unions trying to dilute labour while the employers hampered that process, of the urge for more effective production coming from the common people,

who realized what was at stake in the struggle, and of the old traditional forces of vested interest at best doing nothing to achieve the necessary rapidity of reorganization. There were very strong reasons at that point why Morrison and Bevin and the other Labour Ministers should not reorganize so much as inspire. To attempt reorganization then might have meant so many "Spitfires" fewer in the next few weeks, and that we could not afford to risk. But if we look at one department after another to-day, surely it is perfectly clear that the basis on which the war is being conducted, the entire system of using private capitalism as the instrument for conducting the war, makes it totally impossible for an adequate war effort to be developed. Vested interests stand everywhere in the way. The entire system on which we base our contracts, by which we use the profit-making organizations of capitalism as the instruments of war production, forbids us to mobilize our resources, forbids us to move men and machines to the places where they are wanted, prevents us from building up a system of production compatible with the conditions of totalitarian war. Bevin and Morrison and the other Labour Ministers are now at the point at

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which they have to say either "All the little difficulties in the way of passing from the capitalist-controlled to the State-organized phase of war are too formidable for us to face" or "Now we have reached the stage at which we cannot achieve anything further by patching up here and there, we have to institute a radically new phase of war organization. We have to begin putting our Socialism into practice." The real issue is: Are we going to leave the profit-seeking firm in existence as the unit of production or are we going to take over the war industries and make them State-owned and State-controlled, in order to ensure their unified adaptation to the needs of war? Once our leaders are prepared to insist that no consideration of either immediate or post-war profits shall be allowed to influence the use made during the war of our national economic resources, that the owners of industrial establishments shall be given such fixed allowances as may seem suitable to their circumstances but no more than this, and that during the war period the control of every establishment shall become a matter for the State, as the organizer of the national forces of production,—once these things are insisted upon, we shall not only

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break down the particularisms of the profit-seeking business units, but, I am convinced, we shall also get a totally different democratic spirit into the minds of the workers. They will then be assured, by deeds and not by words alone, that this is a war fought, not for the maintenance of obsolete capitalist institutions but for the establishment of a new economic order, and they will then be ready to accept without objection much more State control over their own lives and (what is of much greater importance) will react much more decisively in creating institutions of their own for collective self-expression and working-class self-government. It will make an immense difference to the war effort when the workers can feel that the industries within which they are working are *their* industries and the nation's, and not that these industries, still belonging to the employers, are but working temporarily under a State control which often looks in practice all too like control by the great capitalist combines, and are still under managements which are thinking not merely in terms of war production but also very largely in terms of maintaining the business structure so that they will be able to resume profit-making as soon as hostilities are at an

end Once our leaders accept the responsibility for taking over the basic industries, a different spirit will enter into the conduct of the war in the political as well as in the economic field We shall then have shown that our democracy is capable of constructive decision, that it is not suffering from "fatty degeneration", that it can take matters into its own hands, assert itself and begin building a new society Whether this war is to end with a constructive social democracy rather than with a collapse of social democracy here, as it has collapsed in so many other parts of Europe—whether there is to be a real twentieth-century third alternative to the plain alternatives of Communism and Nazi State capitalism, depends on the ability of the British Labour movement and of its leaders to realize the importance of this choice now, while the war is still undecided, and, rather than be deterred by the accumulation of minor difficulties which stand in the way, to make a constructive fundamental decision in spite of every obstacle interposed by vested interests and bureaucratic red tape

The great question, then, is - Can we put behind democratic Socialism the driving force which will enable it to stand up to the blows



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of the Totalitarians, and, even while keeping the enemy from the gates, build strong foundations for the peace and for the new ways of living that are imposed upon us by man's victories over the forces of nature ?

What, in outline, are the essential qualities that we must build into the walls and strong places of our new City ? That we must make it strong, goes without saying there must be no room in it for idleness or for parasites , for the City cannot be strong unless it can find scope for all its citizens to labour in the common service We cannot therefore any longer allow the business or idleness of any man to depend on the fiat of some other man, or some great impersonal company, that sees, or does not see, a prospect of profit from employing him The Right to Work, and therewith the Right to Leisure after work, must be built into our new foundations But the Right to Work implies the power to provide work It implies that the society as a whole, and not some private employer, is to be the arbiter in deciding what work is to be done It implies the collective planning and control of the industrial effort of the people, with need, not profit, as the criterion of worthwhileness in setting men to work The

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Right to Work is the corner-stone of Socialism, because it implies Socialism

But—can we have the Right to Work without imposing the tyranny of the State upon the people? There is no unemployment, none that matters, in the Soviet Union—or in Nazi Germany. But is there any freedom, either? Can we abolish unemployment without introducing what Mr Hilaire Belloc has called “The Servile State”?

Why not? The conditions imposed on us by modern industrial technique require that the factory and the mine shall be organized for production in accordance with a general plan, and that it shall not be left to private proprietors to decide whether it is or is not worth while to employ these instruments of production. But there is no need, even in time of war—much less in time of peace—to apply to the main body of the workers any compulsion to work in a particular establishment. In wartime, it may be necessary to order a few key men, highly skilled workers, to go where their services are most urgently needed, and it is very necessary to make sure that all are engaged on some form of nationally useful work. Under a socialized economic system the worker can be left full freedom to change

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his place of employment or his job—indeed, he can be given much more freedom than he has now, by making it easier for men who have made a wrong choice at the outset to learn a new trade. This will not happen automatically under Socialism, but it can happen, if we want it to happen, and that it should happen is fully consistent with the technical conditions of twentieth-century production.

It is one clear lesson of the war that it is the employer, the business firm, and not the workers, that have to be disciplined in the interest of maximum output. It is the individualism of business in some trades, and equally the restrictiveness which develops wherever capitalist businesses shed their individualism and join together in combines and trade associations, that hamper the productive effort. Organize the factories and bring them under a common direction seeking not maximum profit but maximum production of useful goods, and there will be no need to coerce labour. Labour, with its strong tradition of trade union solidarity behind it, will organize itself for the task of co-operating in the common plan. It is doing this to-day, with signal success, what stands in the way is the rooted

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fear of business men that if they throw down the barriers in the way of higher production, the post-war world will become glutted with goods for which there will be no market when the abnormal demands of warring States have ceased

The workman can have freedom under the new large-scale industrialism, provided that the employer is not left free to damp down production in order to preserve his profits. But this implies that the State will be able to find markets for everything that can be produced. This in its turn implies something else. The Nazis have been able to banish unemployment because from their very advent they have been producing intensively with a view to war. Under such conditions, full employment is quite consistent with a low standard of living for the mass of the people. War preparation involves a low standard, because it, like war itself, diverts a large part of the national manpower and machine-power to meeting the special demands of the Government. But under the conditions of peace full employment requires a high standard of living among the main body of the people, as a means of distributing the expanding output of industry.

In this country standards of living are already

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relatively high, and the demand for new capital equipment can be met, even if we decide on very large measures of economic reorganization, by a tiny fraction of our total productive resources. If we can but get rid of the need to prepare for war, and use all our resources for improving standards of living, we have all the ingredients to our hands for making a rapid advance in the arts of life. Managerial capacity and manual skill are ours in abundance; it is the want of central drive and direction towards a diffused welfare that holds us back.

In order to achieve this drive, we shall have to base incomes on what we can produce, instead of limiting production to what incomes can buy. The employer who refrains from production for fear of glutting the market thereby destroys the market, and helps to make his fears come true. It is an essential part of any planning for welfare, such as Socialism connotes, that incomes shall be planned to correspond to productive capacity, and shall be well diffused. "Money is like muck, not good unless it be well spread." Adequate consumers' demand requires that incomes shall not be left, any more than production, to be settled by the higgling of the market, but shall

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be planned so as to yield the largest possible sum-total of welfare

Socialism, however, though it involves a generous approach to economic equality, is not wholly a bread-and-butter question. As I have said, it is also, and ultimately, a question of the spirit of man. As giant power spreads over the world, as the units of production grow larger and the units of business control much larger still, the mass of men pass more and more under the domination of the machine. Immensely greater power to control the lives of the many passes into the hands of the few—is long as the few are allowed to own and manipulate the machines. This is true not only of industry, or of warfare. It is true of propaganda also, with its new techniques of psychological approach. Individualism and *laissez-faire* quite change their practical meaning when the individual comes to mean in practice a great capitalist trust or a newspaper syndicate with unlimited capital at its back. It is useless to wish these giants away, or to sigh for the joys of an age of little things. There can be no peace for the soul of man, and no space for the individual to live his own life, unless we have learnt by collective action to subordinate these monsters to our needs.

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This is our task for to-day and to-morrow—to subdue these giants to our will without making them at the same time the masters of our spirit. I am not a Communist, but a good Fabian Socialist, precisely because I fear that a Communist Revolution, by sweeping too much away, would enthrone in the minds of the new generation the iron spirit of the mass-producing machine, whereas a milder Socialist Revolution could bring to the control of the machine the liberal spirit that values difference, and reckons suffering at a high rate in the scale of things to be put down.

But the danger is that this liberal spirit may be perverted into mere negation, or into sloth. It is disastrously easy to make tolerance an excuse for inaction and to mistake laziness and cowardice for judicious caution and a humane temper. It is easy to do nothing, on plea of the danger of doing the wrong thing. These perversions are disastrous in the world of to-day, when science is forcing upon all men vast readjustments in their ways of life, and every new discovery can be seized upon as a weapon of rapine unless it is promptly harnessed to creative use. Every invention, every advance in man's knowledge, is *muchin mallecho* unless it is collectively controlled in the service

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of the common people Socialism is, in the last resort, simply the means to this control A Socialist civilization is one in which the past victories of humanity are not thrown away, or bombed into unrecognizable fragments because they have been misapplied, but are used as a basis for further conquests in the interests of ordinary, decent people The trouble is that these ordinary, decent people, who claim for the most part nothing better than to be let alone, cannot be let alone until the world has settled its fate anew The bombs will fall upon them, the giant machine will bind them to the will of its masters, the megaphones will blare propaganda at them, and they will live unquiet lives, until they themselves realize that, for very peace and quietness, they must do for themselves what no political sect can do without them—claim their right to be free, not by turning their backs on the juggernauts that ride over them, but by facing manfully the task of bringing these monsters under collective, democratic Socialist control



# FABIAN SOCIETY

## AND WAR

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INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST RESEARCH  
AND

INTENSIVE SOCIALIST EDUCATION

are essential if democracy is to be preserved and  
the war is to be followed by a constructive peace

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BY

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